

FirstLight
INSPIRING YOUNG FILM

Film and Citizenship
Screenwriting Kit



department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

BARCLAYS

FirstLight
INSPIRING YOUNG FILM

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introduction



Filmmaking is a valuable tool to encourage young people to channel their creative energy and explore the issues that affect them. First Light, which helps young people gain experience in filmmaking, has teamed up with the Department for Education and Skills and Barclays, to promote film production in schools through the new citizenship curriculum.

First Light Film and Citizenship aims to help schoolchildren understand citizenship issues through film and encourage teachers to use filmmaking in practical ways in the curriculum.

The introduction of cheaper digital equipment and editing packages over the past decade has made filmmaking technology more accessible and easier to use. Creative young people working with friends at home, at school or through youth groups can produce high quality short films.

First Light has produced this Screenwriting Kit containing practical classroom exercises, proposals, and tips on thinking up film ideas, to encourage schools to write their own film scripts.

Further copies of the **Film and Citizenship Screenwriting Kit** are available from:

First Light Film and Citizenship
c/o Apt Films, 225a Brecknock Road,
London N19 5AA.

Or online at www.firstlightmovies.com

Please refer queries to:
citizenship@firstlightmovies.com
or call 0121 693 2091

filmmaking in the classroom

Filmmaking utilises many of the skills central to the citizenship agenda: students research a topic or theme, develop and advocate ideas and communicate in a variety of ways. The process of making a film leads to debate and discussion about the issues being explored.

By working in groups, students learn to collaborate and communicate with each other, negotiating their way through the process of planning and making their film.

Young people are brimming with creative potential, but don't always have the means to express their imaginations. Filmmaking is an important part of young people's creative education and is a great way for them to show their resourcefulness and innovation and communicate with others.



The film production process

It's useful to understand the whole filmmaking process before you begin work on your film idea. The filmmaking process can be broken down into the following stages:

Research and development

The story/idea is researched and refined. The producer, director and writer will raise the money needed and write the script to make the story clear and entertaining. Detailed work at this stage is essential, to iron out problems before production starts.



Pre-production

The practical planning stage involves deciding on actors and technicians, arranging locations and equipment and scheduling filming.



Production

The film is shot, working to the schedule prepared at the pre-production phase. Flexibility in dealing with unforeseen problems is key to this phase of the work.



Post-production

The film or video footage is edited to produce the final film. Music, sound and finally the credits are added. At this stage decisions regarding marketing and screenings can be finalised.

More advice and information about how to make your own film is available at

www.firstlightmovies.com/filmmaking.php

See over for start of classroom activities



classroom activities

starting off

These activity cards, and the accompanying video, can be used as a basis for classroom lessons, to prompt group discussions and encourage students to think through the screenwriting process. Each card gives different ideas for a lesson.



To start with identify which of the three areas of citizenship (rights and responsibilities; communities and identities; the democratic process and government) you will address and agree on the film's theme. At this stage don't feel too tied down by the curriculum. Encourage students to use their imaginations. They can then start to develop stories based on the ideas they have generated. You could also use a small newspaper, television or radio news item (short articles are better for this exercise) that relates to a citizenship issue.

The activity cards take you through the following:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Developing characters | Developing a setting |
| Developing emotions | Action/structure |
| Audience | Video tasks |
| Writing a treatment | |

The pages following contain suggested classroom activities for these areas. Using these as a starting point, students will be able to work towards a full treatment of their film. You can supplement these activities with the video tasks included. Finally the kit shows how a page of film script is laid out.

For more information on filmmaking, visit www.firstlightmovies.com/filmmaking.php

classroom activities

developing characters

Questions for group brainstorm

What kind of characters are involved in the story? Encourage students to involve a range of people affected by the events of the film. What relationships with each other do they have? How do these relationships change during the course of the film? What objectives are the characters pursuing?



Hot-seating

A student pretends to be one of the characters while the class asks questions about their thoughts, feelings and motives. For instance, the questioning session could put the group in roles as journalists at a press conference, encouraging them to write questions and note the answers.



Video tasks

See Veronique and clip 1.



Character profile

Write a character profile outlining the following:

Name
Age
Gender
Occupation
Education
Likes
Dislikes
Important life events
Character motto

[See over for more classroom activities](#)

classroom activities

developing a setting



Questions for group brainstorming

Where's the story set? How will you present the mood or atmosphere of the setting? What locations do you have access to?

Location file

Research potential locations: the best way to do this is to build up a location manager's file of pictures of local sites that give strong indications of possible settings for the film.

Soundscape

Split the class into small groups. Get them to create a soundscape of the film's location, using just their voices, bodies and objects to create sound effects. The only rule is: no words. Other students in the class describe the mental pictures created for them.

Video tasks

See Veronique and clip 2.

classroom activities

developing emotions

Questions for brainstorm

What kinds of emotions do the characters experience? What kind of emotional response do you want from the audience? How can you construct the film around key or climactic moments of emotion?

Freeze frame

Ask students to create key moments in the story through three frozen/still pictures, or tableaux. The viewers analyse the emotions being experienced to plot the emotional journey of characters and identify climactic moments.

Write a letter

Each student writes a letter pretending to be one of the characters, confiding their feelings about the events of the film. Compare the emotional reactions of different characters, using the letters as a basis to empathise with them.

Video tasks

See Veronique and clip 3

[See over for more classroom activities](#)



classroom activities

action/structure

Questions for brainstorm

What happens in the film? Is the narrative clear?
Do the events follow in order? Are there too many events crammed into the film, too much dialogue or too little action?

Creating a structure

Plan the sequence of events/scenes by writing a series of statements to describe key dramatic points on pieces of paper. You can juggle the statements to find the best running order. Use small groups to create structures from the viewpoints of differing characters. Tell the story to each other – what works, what holds people's attention, where does it waver?

Eye witness

Students work in pairs with one playing a character from the film. He/she tells the other about the action of the plot. Mock TV news interviews or police interrogations can be useful vehicles for this activity.

Inner voice

Students script the thoughts of characters at dramatic moments before, during or after the action of the film. This exercise helps them explore underlying causes and motives.

Video tasks

See Veronique and clip 4.



classroom activities

audience



Questions for brainstorm

Focus on the audience when developing the film as it helps students to refine and adapt the messages they want to convey. Who has a stake in the issues addressed by the film? What messages do you want to give your audience?

Audience profile

Many films are made with a specific audience in mind. Identify a range of audience members, for example:

- Young person
- Businesswoman
- Elderly person

Divide the students into groups, each working on an audience type. Brainstorm the lifestyle of the audience member and create an audience profile.

Marketing

Having identified an audience, ask students to design a film poster/flyer/homepage. This will help them communicate the key concepts of the film.

[See over for more classroom activities](#)

classroom activities

video tasks

A video featuring the short film *Veronique*, followed by four clips from films by young people comes with the First Light Screenwriting Kit. Use the film clips as a basis for classroom discussion about short films and their ability to successfully convey messages and stories. *Veronique* won the Orange FilmFour Prize for Short Film, 2002. It shows how a good short film successfully develops a simple idea to tell an entertaining story. Both *Veronique* and the additional four clips from films made by schoolchildren using First Light funding, provide a useful starting point to look at the ways films establish settings, characters, emotions and actions. Below are some questions which can be used to start class discussions or brainstorm.

Developing character

Veronique (6 mins)

Watch the film *Veronique* and discuss the following:

- Who are the characters and what is their relationship to one another?
- Who is the narrator?
- Who is he speaking to?
- Discuss how the characters change during the course of the film.

Clip 1 - Wake up Call (1 min 30 secs)

Made by a group of 14-year-old girls from Liverpool, *Wake up Call* is about the effects of a father's drinking on his family.

- How is the audience given information about the relationships between the characters?
- Discuss how you would use the issue of alcoholism or addiction in a film.

Developing a setting

Veronique (6 mins)

- Discuss the use of location in the film.
- How many locations are there?
- What atmosphere does the bus create?
- What does the location say about the main character's feelings and emotions?
- Could the filmmaker have chosen another setting, and what effect would this have?

Clip 2 - What Would You Do? (1 min 10 secs)

What Would You Do? made by 14 and 15-year-olds from Sheffield is about teenage pregnancy. In this clip the young girl has told her parents she is pregnant.

- What does the setting say about the girl's state of mind?
- Why do you think the filmmaker chose to set this scene on a bridge?
- Discuss how you would use the issue of teenage pregnancy in a film.

Developing emotions

Veronique (6 mins)

- List the range of emotions you experienced when watching the film.
- What emotions do the characters experience?
- Describe the emotions heard through the voiceover compared to those you see the characters experience on screen.
- What emotions does the film's music evoke?

Clip 3 - Billy No Mates (1 min 36 secs)

Made by a group of 11 and 12-year-olds from Croxteth, Liverpool, *Billy No Mates* explores the effects of bullying.

- How does the clip make you feel?
- How does the film make you feel this way?
- Discuss how you would show the issue of bullying on film.

Action/structure

Veronique (6 mins)

- Describe the key dramatic points in the film.
- How would the film be different if it was told from *Veronique's* point of view?
- What alternative endings could there be for the story?

Clip 4 - Gilcomstoun's Beach (1 min 30 secs)

Made by a group of primary schoolchildren from Gilcomstoun in Aberdeen, this animated film explores the issues surrounding marine pollution.

- What are the filmmakers trying to say to the audience?
- Discuss what you would include in your own film to highlight an ecological issue in your local area.

classroom activities

writing a treatment

Once you've come up with your film idea, prepare a treatment. A treatment would normally be given to potential financiers or producers to get the film made. It's a description of the story, including atmosphere and setting and it should communicate the story in about 300 words.

Here is a framework for your treatment:

Title

This can be the working title for your film



Log line

This is one line that sells the basic idea of your story, for example 'Justice prevails because crime doesn't pay.'



Market/audience

Provide examples of two or three films that indicate the kind of audience you want to target. (You can give feature films as examples.)



Story setting

Describe briefly the location and 'world' of your film.



Background to the story

Outline briefly the issues underlying your film.



Outline of the story

Here is how it would work for "Veronique": ("**Title**")

A boy creates an imaginary love affair with a girl who shares his bus journey. (Log line)

A film for anyone whose hopes about a relationship didn't quite meet reality, for an audience of 12 upwards. (Market/audience)

The film is set on a bus on a drizzly Monday morning. A teenage boy is on his way to school. But this morning is different - a beautiful young girl also gets on and the moment he sees her he falls madly in love. (Story setting)

The film was inspired by a real-life experience of the writer and director, who fell in love on a bus when he was 15. (Background)

Through the use of a voiceover, the boy tells his best friend (who the audience never sees) all about her. Her name is Veronique, she's French and she's an actress. He tells him how when she got on the bus he found the courage to sit next to her, start a conversation and within minutes it was as though they'd known each other for ever.

The film shows the reality of the girl alone in the seat in front of him while he looks at her longingly. On Tuesday she boards the bus, but again doesn't acknowledge him or speak to him. This time, through the voiceover, he tells his friend how they met for a second time and how much they love to talk.

On Wednesday, he tells his friend that they have plans to visit Paris in the summer, and although his parents aren't keen to let him go, nothing will keep them apart.

But on Thursday the girl doesn't board the bus and the film shows him distraught. His friend asks why he hasn't mentioned her. The boy tells him that she's moved to France for a part in a film. Although she insisted she wouldn't go without him, he wasn't prepared to stand in the way of her career. As the bus pulls up to the school gates, bravely he says that he'll always remember her, but, admits if he's honest, he's probably too young for a serious relationship. (Outline of the story)

Veronique, the short film written and directed by Patrik Bergh, was the winner of the Orange FilmFour Prize for Short Film, 2002.

For further information about the film visit www.firstlightmovies.com

An extract from the script is on the back cover.

The first scene from the actual film script of Veronique by Patrik Bergh,
the winner of the Orange FilmFour Prize for Short Film, 2002.

**INT. 1 LOCAL BUS –
RAINY MORNING**

We hear the hypnotic and
monotone sound of the bus
as we open on a MAN

YAWNING. The camera then cuts
to various passengers on the bus;
another MAN CHECKING OUT PAGE
3 in The Sun, two WOMEN IN EARLY
THIRTIES CHATTING, a FACTORY
WORKER clutching a lunch box in his
lap...We then cut to a young and fresh-
faced boy at the age of thirteen to fourteen
sitting towards the back of the bus...
he is leaning against the window and looking
out at the bleak landscape with a
bored/dreamy look on his face.

(VO) BOY:

I'm in love.

(OS) FRIEND:

What did you say?

(VO) BOY:

*I'm in love. I'm in love with a girl. I tell you I
never been so happy. It's the most...the most
amazing feeling.*

The BOY'S eyes shift to the raindrops running
down
the window, tracing two of them until they
finally join together to one.

(OS) FRIEND:

When did you meet her?

(VO) BOY:

We met this morning on our way to school.

BUS DRIVER:

Next stop Lennard Street.

The bus suddenly stops and we hear the sound
of the doors opening and passengers getting on.
The BOY casually shifts his attention to the front
of the bus.

(VO) BOY:

*It was just so crazy; as soon as she stepped on
the bus our eyes met and there was this instant
attraction between us.*

We now see a sudden and quick change
beginning to take place in the boy. His face
seems to light up as he sees a young and pretty
girl among
one of the new passengers. She is wearing a
bright red rain jacket.

(VO) BOY:

*At first she just froze and stared at me as if...as
if hypnotised or something and then – as she
walked down to her seat – our eyes were like
locked on each other.*

At first glance he cannot see her fully as she is
wearing a hooded jacket...but as she walks down
the aisle of the bus he watches her with an
immense intensity. Seeming to be in her own
thoughts, she does at no point look at the boy.

(VO) BOY:

*I guess we were
falling in love at that
precise moment.*

As she moves further down the
aisle towards where he is sitting
his body seems to suddenly become
alive and he sits up straight as if
preparing for a blow
to the gut. Finally the GIRL sits down just
in front of him...

(VO) BOY:

*Then just as she sat down I smiled at her and
she smiled back. From that point it was so
simple really; I just got up from my seat, sat
down next to her and said...something funny
about the weather I think, which made her laugh.
Then we just started talking as we'd known each
other forever.*

The BOY stares with complete and utter love at
the back of the girl's head...before he slowly
leans forward to inhale the scent of the girl's hair.
Finally he turns towards the window with a sense
of wonder expressed on his face.

(OS) FRIEND:

So what's her name?

(VO) BOY:

*Veronique. Her name is Veronique and she's
actually French.*

FADE TO BLACK

The kit can be supplied in large print and is also available online at
www.firstlightmovies.com

First Light

First Light is a nationwide filmmaking scheme developed by the Film Council and the Hi8us Network. The initiative provides funding to enable young people from all social sectors to make short films using a range of digital technologies. The First Light project was set up in May 2001 and is supported annually by £1m of lottery funding.

More than 200 films have been made since the launch of the initiative and some 3,500 young people across the UK are involved in First Light filmmaking.



competition

Once you've written your film idea or outline, you might want to enter our competition to win funding to make the film with the support of film industry experts. Don't worry if you don't have any filmmaking experience, five winning schools will be assigned a professional filmmaker to act as project mentor. Spring term 2003 will focus on script development, followed by a residential workshop in the Easter holidays to prepare shooting scripts and schedules. Finally, the filmmaker will help the students shoot and edit the film in Summer 2003.

How to enter the competition

Schools are asked to submit by post a 200 - 300 word outline, usually called a treatment, of a short film idea. This should cover no more than one side of typed A4 paper. Students should aim to develop a treatment for a ten-minute film.

The judging panel will consider the following:

- Is it a good, original story?
- Will it be an interesting and entertaining film to watch?
- Is it practical to make? (e.g no helicopter chases or filming in the Bahamas)
- Does it relate imaginatively to the Citizenship Curriculum? (We are interested in broad interpretation here)

Permission and support must be obtained from a teacher or head teacher from the applicant's school before entering. A teacher or head teacher must submit all entries. Eligible participants are invited to submit original entries on the conditions overleaf. Please note that these dates are fixed and competition entry assumes commitment.

The **winning entries** will be announced on 10th February 2003 on www.firstlightmovies.com

If you have a query please contact citizenship@firstlightmovies.com

or call **0121 693 2091**



A teacher must sign and complete the following to accompany the entry.

I confirm that I have read and understood the conditions of entry (overleaf) and agree to be bound by the terms contained. Furthermore I agree to give full support to the process of filmmaking during the specified periods within the school named below should the entry be successful.

Name of school

.....
.....

Address

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Postcode

.....

Telephone number

.....

Supporting teacher

.....

Position

.....

Signed

.....

Date

.....

See overleaf for conditions of entry





Conditions of entry:

- 1 Entry into this competition confirms each entrant's acceptance of these rules and regulations.
- 2 Entrants must submit a completed and signed release form (overleaf) in addition to the film outline. Entries will not be returned.
- 3 The film outline ideas should relate directly to a citizenship issue.
- 4 Entries will be accepted only by mail and must be the original work of the applicants.
- 5 Entries must be original work and must be written in English.
- 6 Entrants must be between the ages of 11 to 16. The competition is open to UK schools only.
- 7 All entries must be received by 20th December 2002 and all entries must be sent by post to: First Light – Citizenship Initiative, c/o APT Films, 225a Brecknock Road, London N19 5AA. Winners will be announced on 10th February 2003.
- 8 Entering the competition constitutes permission to use the winners' names and licenses for publicity and promotions.
- 9 Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. There will be no cash alternatives. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- 10 Entrants must supply full details as required and comply with all rules to be eligible for the prizes.
- 11 The competition organisers reserve the right to appoint any mentor/director/producer to work with the winning schools.
- 12 The competition is not open to relatives of employees of First Light and the HiBus network.
- 13 The competition organisers do not accept responsibility for late or lost entries or those sent via the Internet. Proof of sending is not proof of receipt.