

CHAPTER 6

FILM

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INTRODUCTION

We recommend that teachers devote one class to chapter one, human rights exercises, before they embark on this chapter. Each separate class or exercise has clearly outlined aims, objectives, length and NCCA key skills. We have also highlighted the material needed for each class or exercise. All handouts referenced in the classes can be found in the handout section at the end of this chapter.

FILM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Images have a democratic quality to them. Regardless of one's language, level of literacy, or nationality, looking at a video or images of a student being killed by security forces in the streets or a peaceful protester being arrested gives one evidence of, and perspective on, human rights and the universality of suffering.

Moreover, one of the ways of using film in the classroom is to examine the assumptions that those images bring up. For example students' common stereotypes about conflict and poverty in Africa are reinforced through film and media images of starving African children.

As teachers, when showing your class film you should be aware of the following:

- (1) To avoid the development of insensitivity due to the exposure to negative imagery teachers should try to balance this with positive imagery of cases where human rights are being enjoyed;
- (2) Teachers should also explain to the students that pictures cannot tell the whole story, and in some cases they may conceal a great deal;
- (3) Shocking and violent images may overwhelm students. Here, I suggest being both understanding to those students who have trouble with violent images, but also to be clear that being shocked, saddened, and uncomfortable may be part of the learning process, particularly on the subject of genocide.

Amnesty International has used film as a medium in which to teach HRE for many years. Amnesty International has produced curriculum guides to accompany film such as the *Kite Runner*, *Blood Diamond*, *Born Into Brothels* and *Catch A Fire*. If you are interested in using this work on human rights and film, go to www.amnestyusa.org and look for the film curriculum guides.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SECTION

Students will be introduced to human rights inspired films, research and create their own film.¹

Film And VOC

"For Transition Year in Holy Child Community School, Sallynoggin, we were given the opportunity to make our own film in conjunction with Amnesty International. Paddy Breathnach, well-known director of films such as *I Went Down*, *Man About Dog* and *Mighty Celt* (and a past pupil of our school) kindly agreed to oversee our project.

The assistance we received from Paddy was great. He helped us with brainstorming sessions, which clarified our ideas in a visual format. But there was no way the project could have got off the ground without Pat Howe our drama teacher. Pat coordinated the project, encouraging us along every step of the way.

¹ The hope for schools that wish to undertake the film section is that they will have access to a video camera. However we recognise that this may not be the case. We have therefore written the section in such a way that the exercises can be still done with or without a camera.

We decided to base our film on the rights of children, and to narrow it down to just two of the many stories we researched, letting the troubled children speak of their own pain. Auditions took place and it was decided that Tadhg Byrne would play a young boy, neglected by his parents, and bullied in school. Erica McGuinness was chosen to play a teenage girl with alcohol problems. Both stories tried to explain that one cannot always know what is going on in the life of a child even if you spend part of every day in their company.

Most of the filming took place inside the school's grounds and this was the first time for most of the crew to be either in front of or behind a camera. After lengthy scriptwriting and rehearsals, it took about a week to film, and the finished work was then sent out to an editor. Our first opportunity to see the completed film was in May when the whole Transition Year went to the Irish Film Institute for a screening of the four films made in the Amnesty project. We were very nervous but it was a great thrill to see ourselves on the big screen. We later had the chance to travel to the Cork Film Festival to take part in the official premier. The making of this film was one of the highlights of our Transition Year and we would like to thank everyone who made the project possible."(Transition Year 2006, Holy Child Community School, Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin).



Student tries to push back riot police, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 26 March 1999. © Amnesty International.

CLASS 1

VOICE OUR CONCERN FILM

AIM

Students will be introduced to human rights inspired films made by *Voice Our Concern* students.

OBJECTIVES

Students will have

- Learned, from viewing fellow students' work, how ideas about human rights can be used to tell a story or translated into a documentary;
- Increased their knowledge of the human rights issues explored in the *Voice Our Concern* film project;
- Conducted their own research for use in the production of their own human rights inspired story or film.

NCCA KEY SKILLS

Communication, information processing, critical and creative thinking, and being personally effective.

MATERIAL NEEDED

A human rights activity from chapter one, access to the internet to show the film *Child of our Time* on www.amnesty.ie, handout of the case study written by *Voice Our Concern* participants.

Research Briefs (handout section 6.2, pg 149).

Film Research tasks (handout section 6.4, pg 152).

UDHR Statement (Chapter 1, 1.1, pg 34).

LENGTH

Full Class

STEPS:

1. Show the students the film *Child Of Our Time* available to view on www.amnesty.ie;
2. Read out or hand out the case study written by *Voice Our Concern* participants.

Discussion Questions

- Where do you think Jana is from?
- What do you know about the situation there?
- What problems in her home country after the war does Jana talk about?
- What happened to Jana's father when he spoke out against problems in their home country?
- Why did Jana and her father come to Ireland?
- What problems did Jana experience when she went to school in Ireland?
- What problems has her father experienced in Ireland?
- How does Jana feel about living in Ireland now?
- What do you think will happen to Jana and her father when they return to their home country?
- What are Jana's fears for the future?

Research Work: Extra Curricular Task

Leave 10 Minutes at the end of class to organise this research.

STEPS:

1. Divide the class into three groups;
2. Allocate one research brief from the resource section at the end of this chapter to each group;
3. Hand out the film/documentary research tasks to each group;
4. Ask the students to use the internet and the resource section provided to complete their film/documentary research tasks. This suggests some key areas of research that need completing before you create your film/documentary;
5. As a group discuss what particular facts, statistics, images and quotes would be useful for you to find out. Look at the UDHR and write down any articles you think are relevant to your topic;
6. Each group should go home, and using the internet where possible, research the topic they have been given remembering to find answers to the questions, facts, statistics that they have listed out.

If students don't have access to computers at home they could go to their local library or use the school library to conduct their research. Teachers can help the students by bringing in newspapers and factsheet, from Amnesty International Ireland on human rights.

CLASS 2

HUMAN RIGHTS INSPIRED FILM

AIM

As a team the students will aim to plan and create a short film based on a human rights topic.

OBJECTIVES

Students will have

- Worked together as a team;
- Used their research on human rights issues to produce an informative or imaginative film.



NCCA KEY SKILLS

Communication, information processing, critical and creative thinking and being personally effective.



MATERIAL NEEDED

Handouts of research briefs (handout section 6.2, pg 149).
 Writing from Drama chapter (handout section 2.4, pg 62).
 Tips on how to use a camera (handout section 6.3, pg 150).
 A human rights activity from chapter one.
 VOC case study (handout section 6.5, pg 153).



LENGTH

Full Class

STEPS:

1. Ask the class to sit in their groups;
2. Each group should vote for a producer, whose job it will be to keep the project moving, a director, presenters, writers, camerapersons and actors;
3. As a group look at your research brief. On a large sheet of paper, brainstorm everything you have already researched about your assigned film topic. As a group decide what definitely needs to be included in the film;
4. Ask each group to vote who will be the director, presenters, writers, camerapersons and actors;
5. Tell each group that, once they have decided what will be in the film, they should use their research to create relevant issues that their film will address;
6. Visit each group and listen to their ideas, help as appropriate and make sure a 'producer' is steering the team. Support the groups, when required, in identifying the key issues and generate questions that explore them;
7. Discuss the best ways to tell your story, act out the scene, you might consider including a scripted scene; role-plays and interviews. Allocate roles;
8. Work out costumes, the set and other locations for your short film;
9. If your class has access to video cameras, arrange for each film to be filmed;
10. Handout guides on writing prose and film tips. Leave the class to write the script for their short film.



Dominic Thorpe and St. Mary's Secondary School Edendeeery, *Voice Our Concern* 2006, Ballymun, Dublin.

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Follow Up

Advise students, as part of their research for their own film, to look at other human rights inspired films or documentaries. See Amnesty International USA for film guides. Students should try to allocate as much time as possible to write their script and rehearse their film.

CLASS 3

HUMAN RIGHTS INSPIRED FILM

AIM

To produce a five-minute film/documentary on a human rights issue that has been researched, written and performed by the students.

OBJECTIVES

Students will have

- Improved their critical thinking, research and communication skills;
- Created and produced a short film/documentary to be performed/screened in front of their peers.



NCCA KEY SKILLS

Communication, information processing, critical and creative thinking and being personally effective.



MATERIAL NEEDED

Camera, stage and costumes for their film/documentary are needed.
Read out of CRE film project (handout section 6.5, pg 153).



LENGTH

This class can be taught over one or two classes. The more time spent on scriptwriting, rehearsals and practice with cameras the better the work will be.

FILM OR DOCUMENTARY SCREENINGS

STEPS:

1. Rehearse the short film/documentary;
2. Students filming their work should organise their set, arrange for their characters to have their costumes and ensure all their locations are ready;
3. Get ready for your performance. Each group should act out their film/documentary to the rest of the class if they are not filming it;
4. Record your film/documentary and organise to screen it in your school;
5. If students do have the facilities to record the screening of their films/documentaries, please send a copy of your performance to hre@amnesty.ie as we would love to see them.

CEASEFIRE!

HANDOUTS

Amnesty International

FILM



HANDOUT 6.1

VOICE OUR CONCERN CASE STUDY

This handout is used in the following classes/exercises

Class 1: *Voice Our Concern Film* / pg 143

Case- Study: On website film *Child of Our time: Workshop 1: Refugee Rights* Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk, Tralee, Co Kerry, with Terry George as consultant.

THE PROJECT

“It has been such an experience to watch something I had written turn into something so real. I didn’t write the script for the film by myself. Mr Redican, our teacher, had the class suggest ideas, helped by Terry George. I wrote the script with a classmate, Leah Herrick; we helped each other to put the ideas in our heads into words, although we struggled to create the atmosphere of situations we had never experienced. We each wrote our own script outline, then compared them. There were quite a few differences, such as how many people should be in the main family, whether the main character should be a girl or a boy and what the opening scene should be like. Seeing the finished film, which is nine minutes long, was my favorite part of the job. Just catching glimpses of my classmates in the background, doing their best not to laugh during serious scenes, and noticing those tiny mistakes that made the film so real, made all our hard work worthwhile. It was strange to see how much it had evolved in such a short space of time. Changes were made to the script in its transition from paper to footage. Some improved it, others took out some of my favorite parts, but all helped to develop it into the film it is today, a film I wouldn’t believe had been made by a class of 15- and 16-year-olds had I not played a part in its creative process”.

Sarah O’Carroll, Transition Year, Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk, Tralee, Co Kerry, 2006.

Follow up

With students, watch the short film, *Child of Our Time*, made by students at Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk, Tralee. This dramatised story is told from the perspective of a teenage girl and her father, who flee their war-torn country and the obstacles they experience while trying to seek refugee status in Ireland.

HANDOUT 6.2

RESEARCH BRIEFS

This handout is used in the following classes/exercises

Class 1: *Voice Our Concern Film* / pg 143

Research Brief A: Group One

Congratulations! The Human Rights Broadcasting Company (HRBC) has commissioned you to produce a five-minute documentary on the following topic: *The Death Penalty and Human Rights in the United States*. Explore examples of the death penalty. Consider questions such as:

- Why is the death penalty inherently inhumane?
- How does poverty link with the people who are on death row?
- How many people are currently awaiting execution in the United States?
- What proportions of those on death row are of African – Americans descent?

This short film will be part of a series of programmes for schools on *Human Rights and the Death Penalty*, so make sure your finished product fits in with this overall theme. You will have to research the topic and produce a five-minute film that you will act out to the class. Students filming their work should organise their set, arrange for their characters to have their costumes and ensure all their locations are ready. Record your film and organise to screen it in your school.

Research Brief B: Group Two

Congratulations! The Human Rights Broadcasting Company (HRBC) has commissioned you to produce a five-minute film on *The experience of migrant workers in Ireland*. A migrant worker (or 'economic migrant') is someone who has come from abroad to work. Explore examples of migrant worker experiences in Ireland.

- Are there any human rights issues?
- What opportunities do these migrant workers have in Ireland?
- Do any rights need balancing and limiting?

This short film will be part of a series of programmes for schools on *Human Rights and Diversity in Ireland*, so make sure your finished product fits in with this overall theme. You will have to research the topic and produce a five-minute film that you will act out to the class. Students filming their work should organise their set, arrange for their characters to have their costumes and ensure all their locations are ready. Record your film and organise to screen it in your school.

Research Brief C: Group Three

Congratulations! The Human Rights Broadcasting Company (HRBC) has commissioned you to produce a five-minute film on *Violence against Women and Human rights*. It is easy to think that human rights abuses happen to other people, in places of conflict or repression. The truth is that violence against women is an abuse that is not confined to any political or economic system. It is prevalent in every society in the world. It cuts across boundaries of wealth, race and culture. It affects the young and the old. Wherever you live, women are suffering violence. Your researchers should research the statistics, facts and figures concerning violence against women.

- What are the long-term consequences of violence against women?
- How can this abuse be stopped?

This short documentary will be part of a series of programmes for schools on human rights, so make sure your finished product fits in with this overall theme. You will have to research the topic and produce a five-minute film that you will act out to the class. Students filming their work should organise their set, arrange for their characters to have their costumes and ensure all their locations are ready. Record your film and organise to screen it in your school.

HANDOUT 6.3

TIPS ON HOW TO USE A CAMERA WHEN FILMING

This handout is used in the following classes/exercises

Class 2: Human Rights Inspired Film / pg 144

Camera and Image Control can be boiled down to four basic components:

- Focus – Sharpness, clarity of picture;
- Exposure – Brightness/darkness of picture;
- White Balance – The color of light;
- Shutter Speed – How motion appears.

Here are some quick tips for beginners on how to control these four basic elements.

Focus

To focus, zoom extremely close up to your subject, find the focus, and zoom out. As long as neither camera nor subject move you can zoom in or out without any fear of losing focus.

If filming handheld, on the fly, or walking - it's usually safest to use auto focus, especially as a beginner. You simply won't have time to keep checking your focus if following a moving subject.

Exposure

The main thing to be careful of with exposure is underexposed (too little light) and/or overexposed (too much light) images.

You can adjust exposure levels by changing the f-stop/aperture on your camera (on some cameras this controlled by a ring, other cameras have it in the menu). The lower the number (1.2, 2.8, 3.5) the more light you let in, the higher (16, 22) the less light you let in.

You can roughly tell by eye if an image is overexposed – the details are lost/washed out on the brightest part of your picture. To avoid human error - if your camera has a Zebra Stripes function in the menu, turn it to 100% - this way any parts of your image that are over exposed will show up stripey on the LCD monitor. Adjust f-stop accordingly

In low light you can lower the f-stop. If this still doesn't give enough loght try turning up gain. Be very wary of using too much gain as it makes images look grainy.

White Balance

By controlling the white balance on your camera you are telling the camera what type of light you are you are shooting in. The camera changes the colour of light accordingly, to give you the most accurate picture. You should always change the white balance when the light changes drastically.

Usually in white balance settigs you will have four options; indoors (usually a picture of a lightbulb); outdoors (picture of a sun); auto and manual. If you choose outdoors and are shooting indoors, the result will usually be a colder looking picture and vice versa - if you choose indoors and are shooting outdoors the picture will look unnaturally warm. Usually you want to get the closest representation of what you see, so best to go with settings that match your location.

Shutter Speed

Shutter Speed is a reference to how long the shutter stays open to let the light into the camera. Usually video cameras will shoot on around 1/60 (shutter is open for one sixtieth of a second) – this is closest to how the human eye sees things.

You can vary this. A slower shutter speed (eg 1/10) will give you a blurred picture. Changing to an extremely fast shutter speed (1/1000) will give a hyperreal feel to the picture. It looks unnatural but can be a nice effect when filming fast action.

Final Tips

If you are a total beginner and in any doubt about a function set it to auto. However manual offers you more control, you should learn how to manipulate the image!

The best bet is to get an accurate representation of what you see, if you are going to experiment be very sure about it, ideally have done some tests so you know what to expect.

ALWAYS make sure the microphone is near the person who is speaking! Audio will not be usable if you have an on camera mic and are 10 feet away from the person who is speaking, even in a quiet room it will sound echoey. If you can't get a detachable mic, stay close to the speaker with the camera. Try to conduct vital interviews in quiet, controlled places.

The more you use a camera, the more comfortable you'll be!

Source, Filmbase

HANDOUT 6.4

FILM RESEARCH TASKS:

This handout is used in the following classes/exercises

Class 2: Human Rights Inspired Film / pg 144

1. Find interesting news stories to include in your documentary. Pick out interesting facts, statistics, quotes and images. Not sure where to look? Try:

www.amnesty.ie
www.bbc.co.uk
www.irishtimes.com
www.independent.ie
www.sbpost.ie
www.tribune.ie

2. Find out what the key NGOs have to say about this issue. Pick out interesting facts, statistics, quotes and images to include in your documentary. Not sure where to look? Try:

Amnesty International Ireland: www.amnesty.ie
Irish Human Rights Commission: www.ihrc.ie
Immigrant Council of Ireland: www.immigrantcouncil.ie
Migrant Rights Center: www.mrci.ie
Equality Authority: www.equality.ie
The Equal Justice Initiative: www.eji.org
The Gender Based Violence Consortium: www.gbv.ie

3. Find out what laws exist on this issue. What do those laws say?

Pick out interesting facts, statistics, quotes and images to include in your documentary. Not sure where to look? Try:

Amnesty International Ireland: www.amnesty.ie
Irish Human Rights Commission: www.ihrc.ie
Equality Authority: www.equality.ie
The Equal Justice Initiative: www.eji.org
The United Nations: www.un.org
Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org

HANDOUT 6.5

CRE CASE STUDY

This handout is used in the following classes/exercises

Class 2: Human Rights Inspired Film / pg 144

THE PROJECT

The Leaving Certificate Applied students of Errigal College in Letterkenny specialised for a module in film. They integrated several aspects of their course work – communications, arts, creative writing, social education – with weekly sessions at the Letterkenny Arts Centre, where they were taught the techniques for script-writing, story-boarding, filming and editing. It was also an exercise in successful partnership: Apart from Creative Engagement, the Arts Centre, the key teachers (the art teacher and the LCA co-ordinator) they also worked with the North-West Health Board. The film dealt with the theme of alcohol abuse by young people, giving a graphic account of the dangers of teenage drinking. Not only did the film represent a major achievement for the class; it became a widely-used resource for stimulating discussion of the issues presented in dramatic, cinematic form.



The Leaving Certificate Applied students of Errigal College in Letterkenny. © CRE



Dominic Thorpe and St. Mary's Secondary School Edenderry,
Voice Our Concern Artwork 2006, Ballymun, © Amnesty International