

NETFLIX | MARCH 1

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## About *Journeys in Film*

Founded in 2003, *Journeys in Film* operates on the belief that teaching with film has the power to prepare students to live and work more successfully in the 21st century as informed and globally competent citizens. Its core mission is to advance global understanding among youth through the combination of age-appropriate films from around the world, interdisciplinary classroom materials coordinated with the films, and teachers' professional-development offerings. This comprehensive curriculum model promotes widespread use of film as a window to the world to help students to mitigate existing attitudes of cultural bias, cultivate empathy, develop a richer understanding of global issues, and prepare for effective participation in an increasingly interdependent world. Our standards-based lesson plans support various learning styles, promote literacy, transport students around the globe, and foster learning that meets core academic objectives.

Selected films act as springboards for lesson plans in subjects ranging from math, science, language arts, and social studies to other topics that have become critical for students, including environmental sustainability, poverty and hunger, global health, diversity, and immigration. Prominent educators on our team consult with filmmakers and cultural specialists in the development of curriculum guides, each one dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the culture and issues depicted in a specific film. The guides merge effectively into teachers' existing lesson plans and mandated curricular requirements, providing teachers with an innovative way to fulfill their school districts' standards-based goals.

### Why use this program?

To be prepared to participate in tomorrow's global arena, students need to gain an understanding of the world beyond their own borders. *Journeys in Film* offers innovative and engaging tools to explore other cultures and social issues, beyond the often negative images seen in print, television, and film.

For today's media-centric youth, film is an appropriate and effective teaching tool. *Journeys in Film* has carefully selected quality films that tell the stories of young people living in locations that may otherwise never be experienced by your students. Students travel through these characters and their stories: They drink tea with an Iranian family in *Children of Heaven*, play soccer in a Tibetan monastery in *The Cup*, find themselves in the conflict between urban grandson and rural grandmother in South Korea in *The Way Home*, watch the ways modernity challenges Maori traditions in New Zealand in *Whale Rider*, tour an African school with a Nobel Prize-winning teenager in *He Named Me Malala*, or experience the transformative power of music in *The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble*.

In addition to our ongoing development of teaching guides for culturally sensitive foreign films, *Journeys in Film* brings outstanding documentary films to the classroom. We have identified exceptional narrative and documentary films that teach about a broad range of social issues in real-life settings such as famine-stricken and war-torn Somalia, a maximum-security prison in Alabama, and a World War II concentration camp near Prague. *Journeys in Film* guides help teachers integrate these films into their classrooms, examining complex issues, encouraging students to be active rather than passive viewers, and maximizing the power of film to enhance critical thinking skills and to meet the Common Core Standards.

*Journeys in Film* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## A Letter from Chiwetel Ejiofor



I hope you enjoyed watching the film *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

William's story embodies the creativity of young people and acts as a powerful reminder of the achievements we can make when we are not afraid of failure. He encountered many obstacles, but his determination to get an education and unstoppable drive to do what he believed in will act, I hope, as an inspiration to you in this course.

This film tells the true story of a family in Malawi and the difficulties they faced; external factors like the weather, environment, politics, religion, and education have a profound effect on the daily life of many Malawians. I hope this film and the course spark a much wider discussion and action to engage with some of the issues that the film touches on.

William's story continues to inspire the next generation of innovators in Africa and around the world. I hope that watching *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* and the curriculum help to inspire you to never give up on your dreams.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chiwetel Ejiofor'.



# Film as Literature: Understanding Tone

## Enduring Understandings

- Tone in literature refers to the author's attitude toward the subject. Films also have tone, established by the filmmakers.
- While the writer uses word choice to establish tone, the director of a film can use many cinematic techniques.

## Essential Questions

- What are some of the cinematic techniques that a director can use to establish the tone of a film or of scenes within the film?
- How does the visual/auditory construction of a scene affect the overall tone and narrative of the film?

## Notes to the Teacher

The goal of this lesson is not only to teach about the filmmaker's techniques used in *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, but also to help students become active, critical viewers of any film. Students know, in an instinctive way, whether or not a film is well-made. They often lack only the language and tools to make discriminating choices. Adults might be baffled as to some of their choices (grotesque horror movies, tacky dance films, screwball comedies), but students can be as analytical about those genres as any other if they use simple tools that they have learned in class, including how to analyze tone. **Tone** refers to the filmmaker's attitude toward his or her subject, which in a well-made film is conveyed to the audience by filmmaking elements such as lighting, camera angles, movement, cuts, and dialogue.

*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* is a wonderful exploration into how the tone of a scene in the film adds to the effectiveness of the story. The same script in another director's hands could deliver a completely different film, for better or worse. In this film, the screen writer and director are one and the same. With this in mind, it would be useful for students to explore whether having control of both the story and the interpretation is a blessing or a curse.

Some additional resources you may wish to consult for this lesson are:

Use of lighting, exposure, and art direction

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkbt01oLAnE>

How to Write a Great Scene by Michael Hauge & Mark W. Travis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEiZjXO6Cz4>

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED BY THIS LESSON

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1**

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2**

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Duration of Lesson**

Three to five 50-minute class periods

**Assessment**

Quiz on film terms (optional)

Completion of scene analysis sheet

Short essay

Presentation of clip and analysis

**Materials**

Appropriate AV equipment to watch the film

Presentation devices with internet access

Computer access

Copies of the Journeys in Film glossary at

<https://journeysinfilm.org/product/glossary-of-film-terms/>

Copies of **HANDOUT 1**



# Film as Literature: Understanding Tone

## Procedure

### Part 1: Exploring the Meaning of Tone

1. Begin the class with a brief review of a work of literature your students have studied recently. Point out that the author used many techniques to tell the story and to create an effect on the reader. List some of these techniques on the board, such as syntax, diction, imagery, and figurative language.
2. Now add the word “tone” to the list and write the definition for students: “Tone is the author’s attitude toward his subject or theme.” Discuss how tone is conveyed through word choices, the way words are arranged, and images drawn by the author.
3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of possible tones they might take in writing about their families (for example, loving, respectful, fearful, angry, sad, enthusiastic). After students have volunteered some examples, point out that there are as many tones as there are emotions. Project the list of tone words that can be found at <https://writerswrite.co.za/155-words-to-describe-an-authors-tone/> and review it briefly with students. Ask them to save this URL so that they can refer to it in the future.
4. Remind students that an author creates the tone of his or her work by word choices, word arrangements, and figures of speech that are used. Ask what techniques a filmmaker might use to create tone and encourage discussion of student suggestions.

### Part 2: Tone in Film

1. Take a quick poll of students about their favorite movies. Have them attempt to explain why they like these films. Then tell them that, after this assignment, they will be able to watch their favorite film again and explain much more clearly their reasons for liking it. That is, after all, how all of the world’s great directors learned—closely watching the same films over and over again.
2. Distribute the copies of the film glossary and have students highlight the terms you will be using in this lesson. Depending on the students’ familiarity with these terms, you may wish to review the most important ones for this lesson or perhaps even give a quick quiz on them. Here are some terms which should definitely be included in your discussion:

Long shot  
Key lighting  
Montage  
Camera angle  
Camera movements  
Close up  
Focus  
Reverse angle  
Shot  
Handheld shot  
Scene

3. Tell students that they are going to focus now on camera movements, watching a short video explanation of how camera movements affect tone. List the following terms on the board: pan, tilt, zoom, dolly, reverse dolly zoom, pedestal shot, crane/boom, steady cam, handheld, rack focus; have the students copy them into their notebooks, leaving space to take notes. Show the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkbto1oLAnE> a little at a time, stopping after each explanation of a term and asking the students to explain (a) what the term means and (b) how each of these camera movements might affect the tone of a scene.
4. Point out that other elements of filmmaking—lighting, music, pacing and more—can also affect tone. The more students know about film techniques, the more they can analyze and appreciate the quality of a film.

### Part 3: Group Scene Analysis

1. Distribute **HANDOUT 1: SCENE SELECTION SHEET** and review the directions for students.
2. Replay the clips indicated on the handout. After each clip, allow time for students to take notes on their observations. Offer to replay the clip if that would be helpful. After students have written down their notes, discuss each clip with them. Then continue with the next clip until they have viewed all five scenes and analyzed them.

Some possible ideas for discussion:

#### Scene 1: Death of a father (1:32 – 2:57)

The tone of the entire film is set in the opening scene. A brutal blaze of light is omnipresent and serves as a warning of harsh weather on the way. A high, tilt-down shot from the sun reveals the unfruitful setting as well as a close-up of a basket with corn to indicate the importance of the crop for survival. Yet, the arrival of the Gule Wamkulu, framed in wide and long shot, suggests an equally ever-present spiritual guidance. In introducing this presence, the camera does not pan or track; it simply lets the players pass, suggesting that they are a calming fragment of the heartless countryside. When the Gule Wamkulu arrive at the funeral of John, it is clear that this film will show a contrast between faith in ritual and the realities of the world itself. The tone of this film, it is revealed, is a combination of acceptance and hopefulness.

#### Scene 2: William washing (8:37 – 9:25)

This scene is about establishing the domestic lifestyle that will soon be interrupted by the coming drought. The overhead shot of the bucket of water shows both that water is essential, although not readily obtainable by faucet, and is still available. As William washes, quick shots (dipping water, scrubbing hair, etc.), show the viewer that, by Malawian standards, this is a happy, healthy home, and the action is rather routine. One might even go as far as calling this tone bucolic or pastoral. By doing this, the gravity of the drought will be all the more fierce.

## Film as Literature: Understanding Tone

### Scene 3: The light on the bike (29:00 – 30:15)

As the camera moves along with William's actions, the tone of desperation is enhanced. Up, down, side-to-side, the camera follows as William is in the act of stealing. This camera movement continues as he discovers the wiring of the bike and an act of theft becomes a moment of enlightenment. The tone of the scene changes from anxiety to one of wonderment and intrigue. What starts out as a moment of stress becomes a moment of hope. The final static shot of William's face is a perfect way to punctuate the otherwise dynamic scene.

### Scene 4: One meal a day (1:09:02 – 1:10:11)

The problem, of course, is clear. People are dying and this family needs to make a plan in order to survive. This is enhanced in a cinematic way by the complete lack of camera trickery. The scene is simply a series of fixed shots of distraught faces coupled with sparse, but all-important dialogue. Had the director chosen to move the camera with pans and tilts and even overhead shots, the somber tone of the scene could be lost. Often, a break from camera movement and creative framing will speak more loudly than elaborate cinematography; with more camera movement, this scene's desperate tone might not have been as effective.

### Scene 5: Bring it up (1:37:39 – 1:39:40)

Perhaps nowhere in the film are camera placement and movement more crucial than in the first half of this two-part climax. First, the framing of the scene is important and shows the magnitude of the endeavor as large pieces of equipment are juxtaposed against seemingly small villagers. The actual size of the windmill shows the amount of effort

that goes into trying to save the village. Additionally, the point of view of both the villagers and William is revealed with high and low camera angles to suggest that William is now in a position of authority and is to be trusted. Next, added to the inserted shots of William's hands with wires (reminiscent of his discovery of the light on the bike) is the elegant 360° camera movement around the windmill, suggesting that he and the wind are somehow one and the same. As the 360° continues, William looks down at the people he is helping and, as he climbs down, he proudly looks up to see the oppressive sun shining through the very device that will save the village. The triumphant tone in this scene is guaranteed with the use of these advanced techniques.

### Part 4: Independent Scene Analysis

1. Once you are certain that students understand the previous examples of film analysis, tell them that they are now free to choose a scene from the film to analyze independently. Arrange students in pairs and make sure they have access to the film. Allow sufficient time for students to view the film and identify three scenes they would like to analyze, recording a brief title for each scene and its time stamp, as in the examples on **HANDOUT 1**. Each team should submit their choices.
2. When students have had time to choose their scenes, go through their choices and assign one of the chosen scenes to each pair of students so that each pair is analyzing a different scene.

3. Assign a short essay of one or more paragraphs about their scene, identifying directorial techniques such as camera angles, types of shots, and any other techniques with which they are familiar. The essay should explain how the techniques used demonstrate the filmmaker's tone, i.e., his attitude toward the subject of the scene.
4. When students have finished, allow time in class for students to present their scenes, showing their clip and explaining their analysis of it.



## Handout 1 ► P. 1

# Scene Analysis Sheet

**Directions:** Watch each of the following scenes carefully. Then answer the questions below. Use any additional space to take notes on other filmmaking techniques you notice and the ways that they affect the tone of the film.

**Scene 1: Death of a father (1:32 – 2:57)**

Consider why the title frame includes a glaring sun rising. Then the camera shifts from the sun to the overhead shot of the workers. Why? Why does the filmmaker then shoot a close-up of the basket? How does this juxtaposition set the tone for the entire film?

**Scene 2: William washing (8:37 – 9:25)**

Consider the first shot of the bucket down the well and what it means to the overall story. Then, notice the variety of quick, close-up shots to help the pace of a very short scene. What does this scene tell about William's home life? What is the tone, i.e., the filmmaker's attitude toward his subject?



## Handout 1 ► P. 2

# Scene Analysis Sheet

**Scene 3: The light on the bike (29:00 – 30:15)**

As with the washing scene, notice the very quick shots and how the camera follows William's hands. How do these shots that follow William add to his new realization? Would the scene work as well with static, unmoving shots?

**Scene 4: One meal a day (1:09:02 – 1:10:11)**

This intimate scene has only one camera movement. The tilt up from the bag of grain is called an “establishing shot,” one that sets the scene. Why did the director choose to film the scene in this way when he had at his disposal all the possible camera movements and placements? How does this signify the important situation that is taking place?



## Handout 1 ► P. 3

# Scene Analysis Sheet

**Scene 5: Bring it up (1:37:39 – 1:39:40).**

Since this is the first half of the climax, the director uses every trick in his box. How many shots are there and what kind of movement is taking place? How has the director framed each shot? How many camera angles does the director use and what is the effect of these choices?

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