

Using the film ‘Newsreel: poem and context’ to consider “copyright” and notes on the poem and war newsreels.

Marshall Mateer, November 2004

Summary

Watch the film. What’s it about? What are the [copy]rights involved? - the film itself, the poem, the speaking of the poem, the news clips, the people in the news clips...

Target

Teachers - including those on Pathe Archive training/development programmes.
GCSE and Post-16 students; e.g. ICT courses; Media AVCE; English.

Contents

1. Introductory Activities
2. Some information the teacher could provide to students at appropriate points
3. About copyright and links to websites about copyright.
4. ‘Newsreel’ the poem, complete text, by C Day-Lewis
5. Other poems about film and war

1. Introductory Activities

*These could be done very quickly in 10 minutes or over a more extended time.
Could include individual viewing as preparation before the group discussion.*

1. Watch the film ‘Newsreel – Poem and Context’... without access to the text.
2. General discussion about what it’s about.
 - What did you see?
 - What did you hear?
 - Why were the cinema newsreels important to people?
 - What is the poet saying in the final verse?

Introduce second viewings and text of the poem as appropriate.

2. Some information the teacher could provide to students at appropriate points

1. The poem ‘Newsreel’ was written in 1938 by Cecil Day-Lewis.
2. Most of the Pathe Archive clips used are contemporaneous with the poem and they have been chosen to illustrate the lines of the poem as accurately as possible; although of course we don’t know which newsreels Day-Lewis actually saw, or how well he remembered them. There is one point when the film-maker, Roger Lang, makes his own point.....towards the end of his film.
3. There were thousands of cinemas in Britain in all parts of the country showing twice weekly newsreels – giving people their “view of the world”. Attendance figures were huge with millions of people viewing each week. The newsreels were just as sophisticated in their techniques and quality and just as multi-layered in their meanings and impact then as television news coverage is today. They weren’t quaint or old-fashioned to their viewers. Black and white was the colour of news imagery and documentary film became associated with a general idea of reality and truth.

4. The poem includes many references to the newsreel/cinema experience. The films were often called the “silver screen” and Day-Lewis draws on this for his descriptions...”on that silver wall” and “...silver shadows”. The cinema was often called “the dream house” which is a central metaphor for Day-Lewis’s poem; as “the dream-house” with its “loving darkness” induces a mental sleep in which the images on the screen hide the more hideous reality that the cinema-goer will soon have to experience for themselves. There is also a direct criticism of the media in how it constructs a comforting reality “to prove that all is well.”
5. 1938 was the beginning of the Spanish Civil War - first bombing of civilian targets in Western (i.e. the bit British people identify with) Europe - and before the Blitz and carpet-bombing of the Second World War brought the experience of bombing “nearer home”. The Spanish Civil War was high profile, with people of all classes involved, with many supporting the Nationalist or Republican side, and some joining up as volunteers to fight in Spain. It was also a major topic in the media of the day with newsreels and newspaper coverage, pamphlets, books and public meetings. The Spanish Civil War interconnected with many other political and social issues.
6. 1938 was shortly after the experience of the Depression. (*Plenty of items in the Archive about the Depression and life “between the wars”*).
7. Cecil Day-Lewis was born in Ireland in 1904 and died in 1972 and wrote under the name C.Day-Lewis. He was a poet and novelist (he wrote detective novels under the name Nicholas Blake) and became Poet Laureate in 1968. He was married twice and the actor Daniel Day-Lewis (‘My Left Foot’, ‘Last of the Mohicans’, etc) is one of his 5 children. In the 1930s - the period of the poem ‘Newsreel’ - his poetry was influenced by W.H.Auden and engagement with left wing politics and social issues; he joined the Communist party in 1936 and worked at the Ministry of Information during the Second World War. In later life his poetry was more personal and pastoral; he undertook a series of translations and was involved in publishing, broadcasting and committee work. He described his own generation as “*an odd lot; sceptical yet susceptible, Dour though enthusiastic, horizon-addicts and future fans...*” He was buried, at his own request, close to the grave of the novelist Thomas Hardy in Stanisford Churchyard.
Listen to an interview at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/audiointerviews/profilepages/daylewis1.shtml>
See more images at <http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/person.asp?LinkID=mp01220>
Visit his grave at <http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/day-lewis.htm>
8. The experience of one film can reflect onto our viewing of another film. It is difficult to look at the sequence from the Spanish Civil War showing people running down the steps fleeing the bombing and the overhead shots of dead children – “flung rags of children” - without bringing to mind Eisenstein’s 1925 film ‘Battleship Potemkin’ (assuming you have seen it) with it’s famous sequence showing people running down steps away from the soldiers that cuts to close-ups of the consequences of their brutal actions. The pictures of the dead children became icons of terror and brutality and were printed in magazines and on posters. Judging from the number of poems that respond to them the pictures had a huge effect on people at the time. The poems also make clear that there was a clearly developed idea about how the press (the word media was not in use) effected events and responses as well as recording them. See references to these photographs in the poems in section 5 and the notes on the Manic Street Preacher’s song ‘If you Tolerate This’ in the Spanish Civil War Starter in www.shapesoftime.net

Turning the lens of time the other way it is also difficult to see these sequences shot in 1930's Spain without bringing to mind multiple images from news coverage of, for instance the conflicts in the Middle East or the Madrid bombings of 2004. Recently in the events and media coverage of the school hostage crisis and the mass killings in Beslan we have witnessed and seen through our television screens children's bodies laid out in rows in the aftermath of political violence.

9.

One critic has seen parallels between the imagery in C Day-Lewis's poem and a feature film made about the same time, 'Things to Come' itself based on H.G.Wells novel 'The Shape of Things to Come'. He points to two sequences in the film very similar in their imagery and feeling to sequences in the poem.

In the poem the verse about the great guns "Fire-bud, smoke-blossom, iron seed projected" is an extended sexual/generative metaphor similar to a sequence in the film in which a couple are projected into the future. The Spanish poet Lorca – who was executed by a Fascist murder squad – used a similar image in his poem about 'Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard' "...through air where roses of black gunpowder burst...". A.S. Knowland in his poem, 'Guernica' uses the same generative image about the bombs; "...bombs were sown into the earth at Guernica/whose only harvest was a calculated slaughter..." Day-Lewis himself used a similar seed image in another poem, 'Bombers' where he describes:

“Through the vague morning,/a deep in air buried sound...

...

Swells the seed, and now tight sound-buds/vibrate...

...

This is the seed that grows for ruin,
The iron embryo conceived in fear...

The use of the image "thunder of stone niagas" to describe a bombed building strongly resembles a shot in the film of cinema building disintegrating following a bomb hit. It is probably not a case of one copying the other but rather of similar circumstances impacting in a similar way on different expressive media. A similar image is used by the French poet Jacques Roumain in his poem 'Madrid' "...When the cataract of crashing explodes, When the plaster-work of the heavens comes down/And in the city curved fames lick at the wounds..."

Two general points emerge: how an audience's responses and expectations are formed in and move between different media - newsreel, feature film and poetry - and, in the end, how our comprehension of fact and fiction is less clear cut than the definition of the two words might suggest.

- *'The Shape of things to Come', the novel; 1933, HG Wells*
- *'Things to Come', the feature film; 1936, William Cameron Menzies.*
- *'Madrid' Jacques Roumain. Page 165, The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, edited Cunningham, 1980*
- *'Newsreel', the poem; 1938, C. Day-Lewis*
- *'Bombers', the poem by C Day-Lewis, Page 170, The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, edited Cunningham, 1980*
- *'Things to Come 'Newsreel': versions of cinematic influence' published in 'Notes and Queries Journal', March 2002; Stuart Sillars, University of Bergen*

10. The 1930s was a key period in the development of documentary film-making. In Britain film-makers collaborated with poets and musicians to create new forms of documentary. Day-Lewis's sister was a documentary film-maker. How does the bringing together of poem and newsreel in this web-based version 'Newsreel: Poem and context' feel? What is fact and what fiction?
11. More information on the **Spanish Civil War in the British Pathe Archive**, the **Newsreels** and **Documentary Film** is in the Schools Licence Support Website www.shapesoftime.net

3. About copyright

- Many of the resources used to create the film have copyright associated with them.
- We often use the term "copyright" as a portmanteau term to cover everything to do with intellectual and commercial rights as well as the actual copying writes.
- List the things that may have [copy]rights associated with them in the film.

Some teacher interventions.

Q: When was the film made?

A: in 2004...but of course the film clips within the film were made much earlier in the 1930s.

Are all the scenes from the same film? Were they all filmed at the same time? Who filmed them? Were they all filmed by the same company?

Who owns the film now? (not the same as who filmed it?)

What about the poem itself? What rights are associated with the poem?

How is the film being shown? What rights are associated with the media used?

What sounds can you hear? Who read the text?

Who made the film? Where did they get the film clips from?

What about the people depicted in the films?

List of rights associates with 'Newsreel ~ poem and context'

The film 'Newsreel – Poem and Context' was made for an organisation, CLEO, by one of their employees. The creator has a right to be acknowledged for their work but not necessarily any commercial rights on the distribution or commercial use of the film... those probably stay with the organisation they work for, unless their contract has special provisions.

The newsreel clips. The film is based on newsreel clips (short pieces) from the British Pathe Archive who own the copyright for them. They are used here as part of the Schools Licence which permits their use for "education use" within the boundaries of the National Education Network in the UK (plus the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands) (NEN = a secure national network for schools made up of school networks linked to LEA or RBC networks which are, in turn, linked to the National Network.) If Newsreel was being made for broadcasting over TV or showing in a cinema or for publication on the WWW or as part of commercial education software a different, and much more expensive, licence would have to be applied and paid for.

Some of the clips were made by the British Pathe company but some may originally have been made by another news agency. Each clip was the work of a cameraman (and in some cases sound team). The clips, over 60 years old, are now owned by the British Pathe Archive so permission is granted by them.

The question of the rights of people depicted in news film can be considered from moral (= principles of right and wrong) and ethical (= system of or rules for right conduct) points of view. What rights are there to intrude and film and broadcast pictures of children recently killed? What rights are there to shroud the result of bombing civilian targets from world view?

With the increase in communication and recording devices there is an exponential growth in concerns for recording and use of our image; rights to privacy, people's legal rights, use of children's images on school websites or commercial rights (e.g. starts like Beckham and Jo-Lo sell image rights).

If you are making a film can you point your camera at anyone?

Reprinting the text of the poem Newsreel.

The poem 'Newsreel' was written by Cecil Day Lewis in 1938; he died in 1972. Permission to reprint the poem on a website – “electronic permission” - was granted on payment of a fee by an agent, PFD Ltd, who works on behalf of the Cecil Day-Lewis estate.

Recording a spoken version of the poem 'Newsreel'. Permission to record a spoken version of the poem – “audio permission” - was granted separately on payment of a further fee. It was not enough to have the text rights.

The photograph of Cecil Day-Lewis. This was originally taken for the Guardian newspaper in 1963 by a photographer, Derek Parker, who retains the right to be acknowledged, The photo-image used here is from a print owned by the National Portrait Gallery who granted permission on receipt of a fee for publication and made a digital copy for another fee for use in the CLEO film. A second, repeat fee, was paid so the image could be used on the Support website.

Territories. Permissions are restricted to a particular country, to a group of countries or can be world-wide (more expensive). When producing material for an international market copyright permissions become more problematic as different parts of the film may have permissions for different territories. This often happens with television material originally made for broadcast in one country when it is sold on to other countries – e.g. the soundtrack music may not have been cleared for use in another part of the world. In the case of 'Newsreel – Poem and Context', the text of the poem and the spoken version rights have permission anywhere in the Commonwealth but the still photo and the Pathe news clips have permission only for the UK. None of it has world-wide permissions.

Other permissions

Payments are higher if the publication is “in perpetuity” (for ever) rather than for a set time. On websites you pay more if you want to publish the item on the homepage or a lead menu page than for an 'internal' page or lower down a page. Images are provided at specific resolutions to accommodate the mode of reproduction and the maximum size permitted and paid for. The resolution for images granted permission for web use is usually 72 dpi (dots per inch) making it clear and sharp enough on screen but too indistinct for commercial publishing which requires a much higher dpi. You would pay extra for a “print quality” image. You also pay more for “sole use”; i.e. the rights holder can't grant the image permission to anyone else.

Repeat publication

The person granted permission can only publish the item once - they can't publish the text or images again and again - without obtaining repeat publication permissions which usually cost more.

Acknowledgements

In all these cases full acknowledgement has to be given to the source of the permissions using the text provided by the rights holder.

Other people or organisations who have helped produce the film are also given credit.

As with films, you can begin to see why the credits are so long!

3. Further investigations of copyright

What is copyright ?

What are IPR (intellectual property rights?)

Should there be restrictions as to who can publish or copy poems, films, news reports or digital images?

1. Some websites about copyright

Intellectual property <http://www.intellectual-property.gov.uk/>

Intellectual property is the Government's one-stop shop for copyright matters in the UK.

Creative Commons <http://creativecommons.org/>

Creative Commons is an initiative devoted to expanding the range of creative work available for others to build upon and share. It's key principle of "some rights reserved" rather than "all rights reserved" is very similar to the vision of the British Pathe Schools Licence. Developed from GNU (see below).

BECTA http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/display.cfm?section=9_1

The link above opens BECTA's info sheets for schools. Scroll down the page for 'What are the copyright laws about electronic materials?'

Superhighway Safety <http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/document.php3?D=d69#1>

Very comprehensive introduction with links to many of the different IPR/copyright arenas (publishing, music, web, etc). Last updated Dec. 2003.

National Portrait Gallery <http://www.npg.org.uk/live/copyrite.asp>

NPGs introductory page to copyright. NPG has lots of photographs as well as paintings.

2. More websites for further study and reference

The Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd (CLA) <http://www.cla.co.uk/>

The Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd (CLA) is a non-profit making company that licenses organisations for photocopying and scanning. It is well known in schools; covers scanning as well as photo-copying.

Copyright guidance for freelance journalists

Copyright basics for freelance journalists from the NUJ: <http://media.gn.apc.org/c-basics.html>

Guidance on digital photo manipulation from the NUJ: <http://media.gn.apc.org/manip.html>

Bamboo Web

Huge amount of information at <http://www.bambooweb.com/articles/c/o/copyright.html>

Holland and Knight

Production Myths of Documentary Film – interesting FAQ style article from the USA company of lawyers.

<http://www.hklaw.com/Publications/OtherPublication.asp?ArticleID=1719>

GNU

Another take on copyright - or 'copy left' as they call it - **Gnu** is a licencing system designed to encourage software sharing <http://www.gnu.org/> and document sharing <http://www.gnu.org/> See it in action at the very splendid **Wikipedia** <http://www.wikipedia.org> A 'wiki' - from a Hawaiian word meaning 'extremely quick' - is a website developed by using collaborative software - any reader being able to edit and add to the information to the site.

Location rights

Some buildings and locations are protected and their owners require that location permissions are obtained before they can be filmed or photographed - especially for commercial use or publication. In some places you have to purchase a permit to film; e.g. 1. the owners of Trafalgar Square (and you thought as a public place it was you) require you to purchase a permit if you are taking images for commercial purposes. e.g. 2. In many museums, galleries and heritage sites you have to seek special permission to take photographs. e.g. 3. Some buildings, especially recently constructed designer buildings are sensitive to their use for commercial purposes. In many cases, such as museums and churches, you can take images but you have to seek permission and often pay to use them for publication - commercial or otherwise.

Music copyright

One of the most contentious areas is music copyright, particularly since digitisation has taken recording, copying, sharing and distribution out of the hands of large or specialist companies and made it available to 'everyone'; (peer to peer, napster, i-tunes/pods, sampling, etc, etc.). So where to draw the line between anything goes (anarchy) and protecting the creative, intellectual and commercial investment of creators, recorders and distributors and their right to earn a living by their endeavour? ..and how to maintain the quality of the sound?

Mechanical Copyright Protection Society <http://www.mcps.co.uk/> for an official view.

Alternative views at **The Electronic Frontier Foundation** <http://www.eff.org/>

More on copyright at the British Pathe Schools Licence Support Website www.shapesoftime.net

4.

Newsreel

by Cecil Day Lewis

Reprinted by permission of PDF on behalf of the Cecil Day-Lewis Estate.

Enter the dream-house, brothers and sisters, leaving
Your debts asleep, your history at the door:
This is the home for heroes, and this loving
Darkness a fur you can afford.

Fish in their tank electrically heated
Nose without envy the glass wall: for them
Clerk, spy, nurse, killer, prince, the great and the defeated,
Move in a mute day-dream.

Bathed in this common source, you gape incurious
At what your active hours have willed -
Sleep-walking on that silver wall, the furious
Sick shapes and pregnant fancies of your world.

There is the mayor opening the oyster season:
A society wedding: the autumn hats look swell:
An old crocks' race, and a politician
In fishing-waders to prove that all is well.

Oh, look at the warplanes! Screaming hysteric treble
In the low power-dive, like gannets they fall steep.
But what are they to trouble -
These silver shadows - to trouble your watery, womb-deep sleep?

See the big guns, rising, groping, erected
To plant death in your world's soft womb.
Fire-bud, smoke-blossom, iron seed projected -
Are these exotics? They will grow nearer home!

Grow nearer home - and out of the dream-house stumbling
One night into a strangling air and the flung
Rags of children and thunder of stone niagaras tumbling,
You'll know you slept too long.

5. Other poems about film and war

For more of the Spanish civil War see the Spanish Civil War section in Starters.
www.shapesoftime.net

'A War Film'

by Teresa Hooley, 19??

See 'Minds at War' p 223; edited David Roberts, Saxon Books, 1996.

"I saw,
With a catch of breath and the heart's uplifting,
Sorrow and pride,
 "The week's great draw" –
The Mons Retreat;
...
"As in a dream,
Still hearing machine guns rattle and shells scream,
I came out into the street.

Teresa Hooley

Her poem 'A War Film' describes the experience of seeing documentary footage of the First World War and uses the dream state image.

The Mons Retreat was one of the great battles of the First World War. The first propaganda film – silent - of the war, 'Britain Prepared' was shown in December 1915.

Read the whole poem in 'Minds at War' or run an Internet search.

'Spanish Earth' by Bernard Gutteridge

Gutteridge's poem of the Spanish Civil War describes the feelings of confronting death and memory at a time when "perhaps we shall be killed: there is no life secure..." He uses the imagery of the cinema as one of its repeating themes. The poem opens with "Now we can walk into the picture easily..." and develops to recall film dramas and how they touch on the experience of seeing actual deaths. He describes the effects of bombing as "...buildings burning fast a celluloid" (film being made of celluloid a type of plastic). In another poem 'In September 1939' he explores the notion of film as dream or dream as film – the dream/film: "...That memory (of seeing bombers in the sky) screams, That we know as a film or in bad dreams."

'War Photograph' by Stephen Spender

A poem about photography from the Spanish Civil War which is usually regarded as the first Journalist war with on-the-spot reporting, film, newsreel and photography. The poem begins with the famous phrase and image:

"I have an appointment with a bullet
At seventeen hours less a split second
- And I shall not be late."

This verse could be set against the equally famous photograph of the death of a republican soldier taken by Robert Capa. To see the Capa image go to www.magnum.com

Later in the poem Spender describes "My corpse a photograph taken by fate" drawing on a set of references to photography - cameras *shoot* photos or *take shots*; photography *captures* and *fixes* for ever and photographs are *stills* -all alluding to the state of death. Ten years later in 1945/6 in Hiroshima the H-bomb heat-blast was so fierce that it removed a whole human body in an instant leaving nothing except a shadow of person on the ground...a photographic (the word photograph means drawing with light) act ..an actual record. To see such an image

Spender's poem is in many anthologies...just run an Internet search to read the full text.

Elegy on Spain

By George Barker

Dedication to the photograph of a child killed in an air raid on Barcelona

See The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, edited Cunningham, 1980

"O ecstatic is this head of five-year joy –
Captured its butterfly rapture on a paper:
And not the rupture of the right eye may
Make any less this prettier than a picture.
O now, my minor moon, dead as meat
Slapped on a negative plate, I hold
The crime of the bloody time in my hand.

This is the first verse of a long poem dedicated "to the photograph of a child killed in an air raid on Barcelona."

Bombing Casualties in Spain

Herbert Read

The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, edited Cunningham, 1980

Read short poem begins "...but these were children... and ends with this verse describing his feelings on seeing the laid out bodies of dead children.

"They are laid out in ranks
like paper lanterns that have fallen
after a night of riot
extinct in the morning air.

Proud Motherhood (Madrid AD 1937)

FL Lucas

The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse, edited Cunningham, 1980

Another short poem which describes a mother dreaming that one day her son will be "known far and wide" little realizing that her dream would come about on his death through the channel of the media.

"Her darling's portrait thrills
The foreign press.

"Though that's no wreath of bay
About his hair
That's just the curious way
Bomb-splinters tear.

(Wreath of bay = laurel wreath like the gold medalists were given at this years Olympics in Greece)

The War Films

By Henry Newbolt, 1916

See 'Minds at War' p 224; edited David Roberts, Saxon Books, 1996.

Henry Newbolt plays on the coincidence between words that can be used to describe the dead shown in the films (the dead, phantoms tread) and the films themselves (living pictures, silent film, gleam of the projector/screenlight,...) It begins with the seemingly contradictory image "O living pictures of the dead".

"O living pictures of the dead,
O songs without a sound
O fellowship whose phantom tread
Hallows a phantom ground,
How in a gleam have these revealed,
The faith we have not found."

'Before Brueghel the Elder'

by Aleksander Wat, 1956.

Translated from the Polish by Czeslaw Milosz, Penguin 1991.

"...

With those storms of extermination of all by all?
With brutality that has no bottom, no measure?
With the black and white era which does not want to end.
Endlessly repeating itself da capo like a record
Forgotten on a turntable,
Spinning by itself?

...”

Aleksander Wat was a Polish poet who was imprisoned many times in the Soviet Union during the Second World War and whose poetry was ignored in Poland for many years. Brueghel the Elder was a Flemish painter (approx. b 1525. – d.1569) whose work engages both the Christian traditions of the Middle Ages and the new humanist principles of Renaissance. In this poem Wat describes the theme of his painting ‘The Fall of Icarus’ in which the mythical figure of Icarus falls to his death while life goes on seemingly undisturbed by the tragic event. Wat’s version replaces the death of Icarus with the untold deaths of the era and how we substitute the act of work to avoid engaging with “the lava of fratricidal love we feel toward our fellow men...”. “...the black and white ear...” refers to the age of black and white film – the inter-war, the second world war and the post-war era – the 1920s – 1950s. “da capo” is a music term meaning to repeat from the beginning?

Both the English poet W.H. Auden and the American poet William Carlos Williams wrote poems about the Brueghel’s vision of the Fall of Icarus.

To see the painting...its in the Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels or on the web at <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bruegel/icarus.jpg>

The William Carlos Williams poem and the painting <http://www.english.emory.edu/Paintings&Poems/Williams.html>

Feedback

If you have any feedback or new resources to add to these notes please contact Marshall Mateer, at rbcapthe@dial.pipex.com