

Hugo



Directed by: Martin Scorsese

Certificate: U

Country: USA

Running time: 126 mins

Year: 2011

Suitable for: primary literacy; history (of cinema); art and design; modern foreign languages (French)

SYNOPSIS

Based on a graphic novel by Brian Selznick, *Hugo* tells the story of a wily and resourceful orphan boy who lives with his drunken uncle in a 1930s Paris train station. When his uncle goes missing one day, he learns how to wind the huge station clocks in his place and carries on living secretly in the station's walls. He steals small mechanical parts from a shop owner in the station in his quest to unlock an automaton (a mechanical man) left to him by his father. When the shop owner, George Méliès, catches him stealing, their lives become intertwined in a way that will transform them and all those around them.

www.hugomovie.com

www.theinventionofhugocabret.com

TEACHERS' NOTES

These study notes provide teachers with ideas and activity sheets for use prior to and after seeing the film *Hugo*. They include:

- background information about the film
- a cross-curricular mind-map
- classroom activity ideas – before and after seeing the film
- image-analysis worksheets (for use to develop literacy skills)

These activity ideas can be adapted to suit the timescale available – teachers could use aspects for a day's focus on the film, or they could extend the focus and deliver the activities over one or two weeks.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The book '*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*', by Brian Selznick, was inspired by an image from a 1902 French silent movie called *A Trip to the Moon*, which was made by George Méliès – one of the characters in the film.
- The Parisian train station set was built inside London's Shepperton Studios. The external scenes were shot on location in Paris.
- *Hugo* is the first film shot in 3D for its director, Martin Scorsese.
- The film's director, Martin Scorsese, decided to shoot the film in 3D because he wanted the audience to feel like they were 'in' the film with the characters.
- At the 2012 Academy Awards, *Hugo* won 5 Oscars: for Best Cinematography; Best Art Direction; Best Visual Effects; Best Sound Mixing and Best Sound Editing.
- The story of George Méliès, depicted in the film is largely true. Méliès was a magician and a toymaker, who turned to filmmaking when he saw the Lumière brothers demonstrating their new camera.
- Many of the silent films shown in the film *Hugo* are Méliès' actual films – including *Le voyage dans La Lune* (1902).
- The automaton (mechanical man) in the film was inspired by real automata built between 1768 and 1774. Some of these automata are still working today.
- The opening shot of the film, when the camera follows a train into the station, took a year to complete. 1,000 computers were used to render each frame.
- The film's director, Martin Scorsese made the film with clip-on 3D lenses over his normal glasses.



BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT

Time

Key to the story is the idea of time. Hugo's father was a clockmaker, and he has to maintain the clocks in the station. Work with clock faces to help children understand the ways in which we measure time. What if time slowed down? How would you show this on screen? How would it affect the day today? Your year? Your life? Examine clips to see how the film uses the clock, cogs and wheels and the inner workings of the automaton as a theme.

Automatons

Like the clocks, the automaton that Hugo repairs is built using cogs and wheels. Children could design (and possibly build) their own automaton. How are they going to make their automaton move? What will it do when it moves? Will it write, draw, and speak? What message will it try to communicate?

Labyrinths

Hugo lives within the walls of a station. He knows his way through the various passages and stairways. Draw maps and diagrams showing Hugo how to navigate his way through the labyrinth of the station. Perhaps children could work in ICT to type codes to give commands creating a route for the boy to use.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

HUGO WORKSHEET

Shot, pair, share

Explore and analyse the two images on page 7 as a way of critically evaluating the film.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The frame

Describe what you can see in the shot. Where is the camera placed? Why is it placed in this position? Why not high up? Or low down? Or from far away? Or close-up? What is not shown in the shot?

Colour / light

How is the scene lit? Are there contrasts between light and shadow? Why is it lit this way? What are the key colours in the scene? Do any colours stand out more than any others? Why? What does this tell us about the mood of the scene and the character?

Mise en scène

This means, 'everything in the frame', or the way information is communicated through a single shot. Describe the props, furniture, body language and facial expressions. Look at the details of the shot. Describe how each detail gives us information about the character and the scene's place in the film's narrative.

METHODOLOGY

Shot

Discuss each shot as a class. Ask for pupils' initial reactions: what does each shot tell us about the film?

Pair

Ask the children to annotate one or both of the shots in pairs, focusing on framing; colour and light or mise en scène (or all three).

Share

Each pair should then share one or two key observations about the shot.

15-MINUTE WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Shot one

Write about the magic trick that Hugo is being taught. If you can't remember what he's learning, make up your own magic trick. Write instructions so that someone else can learn your trick your age.

Shot two

Write a synopsis or book 'blurb' for the book that Hugo has chosen.

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



Shot Two

