

CINEMA INSPIRATIONS Lesson Plan

Film title and year of release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>La Madre Buena (The Good Mother)</i>, 2016
Timing(s) of excerpt(s) if relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total running time is 5 minutes
Link to film summary (e.g. on imdb.com)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6085616/ http://www.lamadrebuenafilm.com/
Global issue(s) (keywords)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women, motherhood, politics, Trump, Mexico
Level/age of target learners / context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP at B1 and above (though easily adapted for lower levels) Learners do not need to know anything about Mexico
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply Bloom's Taxonomy (original version) to a short narrative film to take students from lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), with the ultimate goal of writing a critical review. Using movies is a good way to get EAP students thinking about responding critically to a piece of input, when criticality is often new to them. They will transfer this skill later to writing responses to academic articles and other texts. There is minimal spoken language in the film – some English and a small amount of Spanish (subtitled). The film is almost entirely visual, making adaptation for different levels easy.
Resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet connection – film available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YMb-j-R4Bc Projector and screen Handout
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TASKS AND PROCEDURES

A. Before you watch (10 minutes)

Prepare students for the film.

1. Project onto the screen photos of the following:
 - (a) Donald Trump: elicit from students who he is, what they know about him.
 - (b) Mexico (e.g. beach, art, Mayan ruins): elicit from students what they know about Mexico.
2. Show photos of piñatas. Elicit the purpose of a piñata. In a mixed-nationality class, those who are familiar with the piñata can explain it to those who have never seen one.
3. Tell students they are going to watch a short film that brings together the three things they have been talking about: Donald Trump, Mexico and the piñata. See if they can predict the connection.
4. Introduce the characters: mother, son, father, grandmother, mystic man and the voice of Donald Trump.

B. The film 1: watching to understand (20 minutes)

Focus on LOTS and a review of summary writing.

1. Play the film in its entirety.
2. Refer students to the handout. Working in pairs, students make notes on the setting, characters and plot.
3. Briefly review the process of writing a summary (ideally, this has already been covered in class). Remind students that a summary needs to cover the key points, that it should be balanced and that it should not contain critique or commentary. *Optional: students write a summary of the film at this stage, perhaps for homework, and return to the film in a future class.*

C. The film 2: watching to critique (30 minutes + homework)

From LOTS to HOTS.

1. Explain that summary writing is simply re-telling the story; the next step is to analyse the film. Discuss the role of a critic (film, music, restaurant, etc.) and elicit from students what this person does. Encourage words like 'evaluate', 'judge', 'comment on', etc. Point out that despite the connection to the word 'criticise', a critique or critical review does *not* have to be negative. It can be very positive.
2. Play the film a second time.
3. Refer students to the handout. Working in groups of three, students discuss the questions in C. Make sure students understand that there are no correct answers; the important thing is their own response.

D. Writing a critical review

An introduction to writing a review.

Show students the outline for writing a critique. Explain the four sections:

- a) Introduction
- b) Summary of the film
- c) Analysis of the film
- d) Conclusion

Homework: Ask students to write a critical review of the film. They should follow the outline on the handout.

ANSWERS

These will vary according to the students' own interpretations.

POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS OR ADAPTATIONS

Extensions: Creative Activities

While the highest point on the original version of Bloom's Taxonomy is Evaluate, on the revised version, the highest point is Create. Activities to develop creative thinking can be chosen from the following:

- Imagine the dialogue between mother and son when the mother returns home with the piñata. Write the dialogue and perform it for the class.
- Write the son's diary entry for the day he decides he wants a Trump piñata. What inspires him? Why is this so important to him? What point is he trying to make?
- Write an email from the mother to her sister in another town. Why does she decide to make the journey? What does the piñata represent for her?
- Imagine the life of the mystic man. Who is he? What is his background? Why does he live in this way? Why does he make Trump piñatas?
- Imagine Donald Trump's reaction if he were to see this film. Write Trump's tweet about the film, together with responses from the writer/director and other people involved in the making of the film.

Adaptations

Because there is very little spoken English in the film, it is easily adapted for lower levels, or for lessons that focus specifically on language development. Some possibilities:

- Focus on summary writing alone, without the critical element. This can include a focus on narrative structure and discourse markers (e.g. *in the beginning, later, at the end*).
- Focus on language structure, such as simple past tenses (e.g. *she rode, she found, she met*) or conditionals (e.g. *If she hadn't found the piñata, her son would have...*).

IMAGE



La Madre Buena (The Good Mother)

A Film by Sarah Clift, Madrefoca Productions, 2016

A. Before you watch

Your teacher will show you some pictures. With your class, discuss these questions.

- a) What do you know about each one?
- b) What might be the connection between the pictures?

B. The film 1: watching to understand

Watch the film. It is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YMb-j-R4Bc&t=18s>.

Work with a partner. Discuss the elements of the film. Make notes; you will use these later.

The setting (time and place)

- a) Where does the story take place?
- b) When does the story take place (past, present, future)?

Characters (people)

- a) Who are the main characters in the film?
- b) What words would you use to describe each one?

The plot (what happens)

- a) Do you remember what happens in the film? Make some notes on the main events.
- b) How would you describe the ending of the film? Is it happy, sad, surprising, etc.?

C. The film 2: watching to critique

Watch the film again.

Work in groups of three. Discuss the following questions. Note: there are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers.

The circumstances of production

- a) What is the filmmaker's message?
- b) Why do you think the film was made? What do you think might have inspired the filmmaker?
- c) When and where was the film made? Is the year important? How about the place? If so, why?
- d) Who was the film made for? Which audience do you think the filmmaker was trying to reach?
- e) How do you think the filmmaker wanted her audience to react to the film?

The content

- a) Why did the filmmaker choose to use the characters of the mother and son?
- b) Is the story believable? If so, how? If not, does it matter?

- c) What do you think are the strongest aspects of the film (think about the story, characters, filming techniques, actors, scenery, background music, etc.)?
- d) If you could change anything about the film, what would you change? Why?

Reaction to the film

- a) The film has won many awards at international film festivals. Why do you think it has done so well?
- b) Are there any groups of viewers who might *not* like the film? Why?
- c) How did you personally react to the film? What emotions did you experience? Did you make any connection between the film and your own life?
- d) Do you have any questions for the filmmaker? If you could meet her, what would you ask or say?

D. Writing a critical review

One way to write a review is to follow this plan:

1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key information: name of film, name of filmmaker, release date. • A brief statement of what the piece is about (just a line or two). • Thesis statement: what do you want to say about the film?
2	Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for about 1/3 of the paper. • What is the film about? What happens? Don't go into too much detail. • Don't analyse here; this can come later.
3	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for about 2/3 of the paper. • Base your review on the questions you have discussed in Part C. You don't need to answer all the questions, and you don't need to address them in order, but you should come to a conclusion about the value of the film – has the filmmaker succeeded in getting her message across? • You can discuss any aspect(s) of the film: story, characters, filmmaking, etc. • Remember that a critique is your own personal, but reasoned, response to the film. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' analysis. Your review can be positive, negative, or something in between.
4	Conclusion	A quick summary and/or recommendation. Do not introduce new ideas here.

E. Homework

- Use the information above to write a review of *La Madre Buena (The Good Mother)*. Your review should be 300–350 words long and should follow the outline above.
- There is an interview with the filmmaker at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lQFedecny4&t=185s>). This might help you with some background information