

Documentary Lens Lesson Plan for *The Winds of Fogo*

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Curriculum Connections

The Winds of Fogo, made in 1969, may be used for studying Canada or the Atlantic provinces. It would be helpful if students had some general prior knowledge of the geography of Canada and/or the history of Newfoundland.

Lesson Objectives

This lesson is intended for elementary social studies programs, with the goal of discovering content through the development of media literacy (as part of the integrated English language arts program). It is appropriate for the upper elementary grades (4-6). The lesson could be used as a part of a unit on Canada; with some modifications, it could also be used in other subjects, such as math, drama, French, art, or music. See the Extension Activities section for suggestions.

The lesson would be best taught over a week-long period. There are five activities of varying lengths, between 20 and 60 minutes. The times indicated may be adjusted, and certain activities may be broken up over two periods, but it is recommended that the activities be performed in the order indicated.

Outcomes/Expectations

Students will

- use media-related materials and communication codes to discover the meaning of a text
- understand the way media portray reality and how this affects their own perceptions
- compare life in their society to life in another society to identify common and contrasting elements
- understand how a community's location and conditions contribute to the traditions and quality of life of its inhabitants
- represent their understanding in a medium that best conveys the message and shows their skills

Key Concepts in Social Studies (Québec Education Program)

Core learnings:

- To explain social phenomena
- To put social phenomena in perspective

Competency 1: To understand the organization of a society in its territory; key features:

- To make connections between characteristics of the society and the organization of its territory
- To make connections between assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society

Competency 3: To be open to the diversity of societies and their territories; key features:

- To perceive the main similarities and differences between two separate societies and their territories
- To define some causes and effects of the differences

Assessment Strategies

To determine if students have grasped the content of the lesson, use a rubric (see sample below) outlining the different levels of competency for each concept or skill. The three main areas of interest for this lesson are social studies, media literacy and English language arts.

Rubric

Rubrics may be used to assess students' performance in given tasks. The benchmarks here are taken directly from the Outcomes/Expectations of the Québec Curriculum. You might choose to plot student achievement as follows:

- (1) Use a descriptor for the level of competency the student has achieved.

Student is able to use media-related materials and communication codes to discover the meaning of a text:

with ease	with support	with difficulty
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- (2) Express teacher level of satisfaction with student performance.

Student understanding that media portray reality and how this affects his/her own perceptions is

excellent	very good	fair	poor
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- (3) Assign a number value to the student performance.

Student compares life in his/her society and in another society to identify common and contrasting elements

4	3	2	1	0
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- (4) Indicate if a student has acquired a skill or concept.

Student understanding of how a community's location and conditions contribute to the traditions and quality of life of its inhabitants is

profound	competent	developing	emerging
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- (5) Write a descriptive phrase for each level of achievement.

Student's written/visual representation of their understanding:

A is creative	A is neat and attractive	A conveys message effectively
B is coherent	B is presentable	B is appropriate for the message
C is confused	C needs touch-ups	C confuses the message
D is incoherent	D is untidy	D is inappropriate for message

Background

The Winds of Fogo is a 22-minute documentary filmed on Fogo Island, a windswept place off the coast of Newfoundland where for generations the inhabitants have lived by, on and from the sea. In this film, fisherman William Wells and his two sons take a day off from the nets for a journey to the gannet colony on the Funk Islands, 50 miles farther out to sea. The subtext of the film provides an intimate view of the relationship between father and sons, everyday life in a rural community and the risks and joys of living off the sea.

Materials and Resources

- Teacher's Notes: British Film Institute Model, A Model of Media Education (see appendix)
- Two class sets of Worksheet for Media Analysis (see appendix)
- VCR and television (reserve in advance!)
- Class set of photocopies of the film transcript (downloaded from National Film Board Web site at www.nfb.ca)
- Sample media text such as an advertisement or a poster (transparency optional)
- Overhead projector (optional)
- One poster board per four students in the class
- Markers (optional)

Activities for *Winds of Fogo*

Students will use the British Film Institute model for media analysis to understand and appreciate *The Winds of Fogo*. Having done this, they will have gained valuable experience in media literacy and a humanitarian understanding about life in rural Newfoundland.

Introductory Activities

ACTIVITY 1: A Day in Our Life

[Allot 30 minutes]

Ask students to record events that occur during a normal day in their own families' lives. They should include things such as meals, school, work, playtime, chores, errands, outings, and other family interactions. Before assigning the writing task, gather some ideas orally from the class or have them do a brainstorming session on poster board in small groups.

Explain that their individual responses may be in point form, prose form, or represented visually. Afterward, students can share their work with the class. At this point, the students are not necessarily aware that this experience will be later connected to the media lesson.

ACTIVITY 2: Developing Skills in Media Analysis

[Allot 30 minutes]

To foster awareness of media messages, present a media image that the students are familiar with, e.g., a movie poster, a magazine ad or a TV commercial. This image can be handed out, projected onto a screen or shown on TV, as applicable.

Hold a brief discussion on what the media image is and what students' experiences with it have been.

Distribute the Worksheet for Media Analysis so that students may fill it in as you lead them through the different questions. (You can use Teacher's Notes: British Film Institute Model, A Model of Media Education to guide you.) Or you could use the overhead projector to fill in the worksheet as a class.

Developing Understanding

ACTIVITY 3: Film Analysis

[Allot 1 hour]

Step 1: Before showing *Winds of Fogo*, explain to the class that you would like them to use their media skills to uncover the meanings in the film you will show. Talk briefly about what things to look for.

Step 2: Hand out new, blank copies of Worksheet for Media Analysis. Also explain that the way the people talk in the film may be different from the English they are used to hearing, and a transcript will be provided so they will be able to follow along. You may need to explain that a transcript is a written copy of the words spoken in a film. Hand out transcripts; one copy per two students, if you wish. Play the film, pausing to point out important images or to replay interesting passages.

Step 3: After students have seen the film, have them share their findings in small groups, then in plenary using the overhead projector. Focus particular attention on the last three areas in their Worksheet for Media Analysis.

Media Language (imagery and symbolism)

- Why does a compass appear at the beginning and end of the film?
- What does the music in the film make you think of?
- Why do we see the sewing machine, but no one is using it?
- What do you think of when you see the different images of water in the film?
- Why do the mother, the cat and the fish in the bowl seem to do nothing?
- Why does the son think so much about flying kites?
- Why do the sons go to the hatchery, but the father stays in the boat?
- Why would the father rather go in a boat than drive a car?

Media Audiences (factors of age, race, gender, etc.)

- What audience was the film made for?
- What age group would get the most from the film?
- Who would like it?
- Who would not like it?
- Do you think Newfoundlanders would watch the film?
- Would they like it?
- Is it possible to watch the film for entertainment, or is it an educational film only?

Media Representations (evaluation of 'real world' relationships; connections to students' own lives)

- What do you think of Newfoundland after watching this film? Is it like where you live?
- Is life easier there or harder?
- What do children do there?
- Do adults have the same kinds of jobs as your parents?

- Is fishing a hard job?
- Why do you think so many people leave Newfoundland even though they would like to stay?
- Is your home similar to the one in the film?
- Where and how do the people in the film go shopping, to school, to church, or to play?
- How important does family seem to be in the film?
- Is your father similar to or different from the father in the film?
- What makes him happy?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes other people happy?

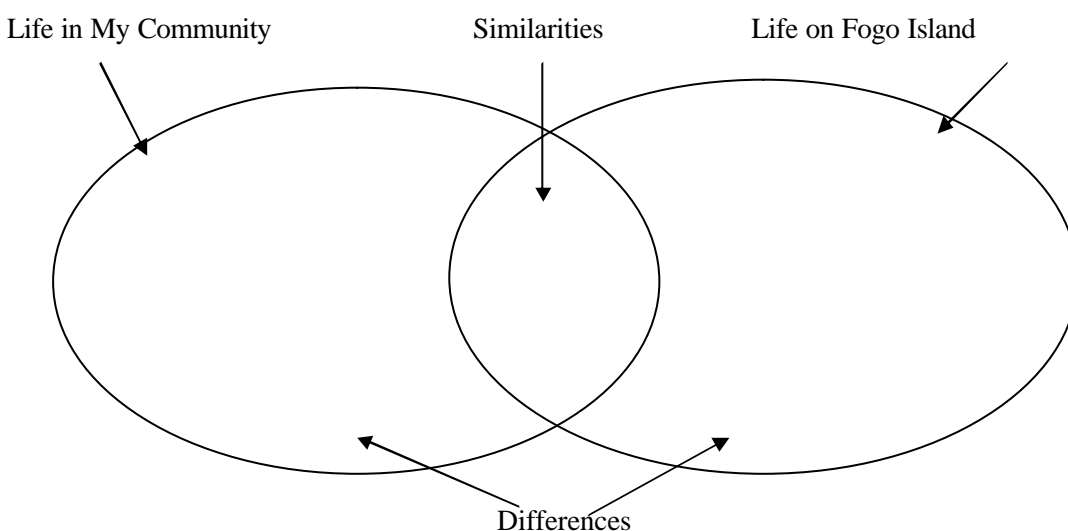
Application Activities

ACTIVITY 4: Using a Venn Diagram for Comparison

[Allot 20 minutes]

Students should have a fairly good grasp now of what characterizes life on Fogo Island, how it differs from their own lives, as well as which aspects of everyday life are similar.

Place students in groups of three or four and give each group a poster board. They will make a large Venn diagram (see below) to demonstrate their knowledge of the differences and similarities.



ACTIVITY 5: A Day on Fogo Island

[Allot 30 minutes]

To culminate, repeat ACTIVITY 1: A Day in Our Life, but this time students are to assume they are living in the Newfoundland community they saw in the film. The same medium is to be used as in the first version, that is, point form, prose or visuals.

Allow time for sharing once some students have finished. Then ask students to bring both versions to a final, “good copy” stage during follow-up lesson time, and the two should be displayed side-by-side. The completed Venn diagrams may also be displayed.

Extension Activities

- Geography: mapping the Newfoundland region
- History: how Newfoundland became a part of Canada
- Social Studies: Newfoundland’s economic struggles
- Science: ecological concerns about fishing; how icebergs are formed; building a bridge to Newfoundland; researching hatcheries
- Mathematics: graphing fisheries statistics; calculating percentages relative to populations across Canada
- Drama: inventing a skit using idiomatic Newfoundland sayings
- French: translating and performing a section of the film; identifying the francophone population in Newfoundland
- Visual Arts: appreciation of Newfoundland art; production of artwork on themes from Newfoundland culture
- Music: collection of traditional Newfoundland music for an anthology; making a recording or live performance of selections from anthology; composing a traditional song about own hometown or province

Worksheet for Media Analysis (Page 1)

Name: _____ Date: _____

TEXT ANALYZED - Title or description

MEDIA AGENCIES – Who is communicating and why? What are the origins of the text? Who has produced it?

MEDIA CATEGORIES – What type of text is it? Identify the medium, the media form, and the genre.

MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES – How was the text produced? What tools and materials were used?

Worksheet for Media Analysis (Page 2)

MEDIA LANGUAGES – How do we understand it? What symbols are used? What images are created to convey meaning?

MEDIA AUDIENCES – Who are the receivers of the message? What does it mean to them? Identify the age, sex, class, race, and political or religious orientations of the intended audience. Tell how the text is interpreted from this point of view.

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS – How does the media present its subject? What judgments or value statements can be made on the basis of the text? Indicate how this compares with your own view of the subject. Has your opinion changed?

Teacher's Notes: British Film Institute Model, A Model of Media Education

(Copied with the permission of the British Film Institute)

The following model is taken from *Secondary Media Education*, a curriculum statement document produced by the British Film Institute.

- Who is communicating and why? (Media Agencies)
- What type of text is it? (Media Categories)
- How is it produced? (Media Technologies)
- How do we know what it means? (Media Languages)
- Who receives it and what sense do they make of it? (Media Audiences)
- How does it present its subject? (Media Representations)

The concepts are all interdependent so that the areas of knowledge and understanding that they point to cannot be taught separately; nor can they be taught in any specific hierarchy—from easy to difficult.

Media Agencies Learning about media agencies means understanding about production roles, professional practices, institutional hierarchies and organizations, sources of finance, systems of distribution etc., but the most important understanding to be conveyed in such studies is consideration of what difference it might make to the meaning or the authenticity of a text if one knew about its origins and sources. If, for example, students consulted a Web site that compared merits of different sources of heating energy, finding electricity to be the most desirable—a Web site that was sponsored by Hydro-Quebec—how would it affect their acceptance of the truth of the text of that Web site?

Media Categories Here we are categorizing media texts in three different ways: 1) the medium itself (e.g., radio, television, film, photojournalism, magazine); 2) the media form (e.g. documentary, fiction, news, drama series); and 3) the genre (e.g., sitcom; western, musical, quiz show, soap opera, sport television program, fanzine, acid-rock). In having students identify the type of text, we want them to notice how media categories themselves produce expectations about the texts and thus affect how they are understood. Students should be looking for the conventions

and the formal elements which comprise each category of text. They should also be aware of the changing nature of categories as new texts break the conventions.

Media Technologies Here we are looking at what kinds of technology produced the text; how they are used and what differences they make to the meaning of the text. Technology can include any tools and materials required to produce meaning, from pencils and paint to video cameras and Web page generating programs.

Media Languages Every medium has its own "language" through which its meanings are constructed. Students need to learn the conventions—the agreed, established ways in which elements of a media text can be made to refer to, symbolize or summarize particular sets of ideas – and the codes—sets of conventions fixed in a predictable pattern of use. This is in order to "read" the texts critically and to construct their own texts.

Media Audiences How are audiences identified, constructed, addressed and reached? How do audiences consume and respond to texts? What sense do audiences make of texts? Do they all make the same sense of a particular text when they receive it? What pleasures do audiences derive from texts? By attempting to answer these questions, students come to grips with the problem of viewing a mass of people as all the same. They learn that factors such as class, race, culture, gender and personal experience also contribute to how audiences interpret texts. Students also learn about how audiences are grouped by the people who are attempting to communicate with them.

Media Representations The underlying notion of this concept and, indeed, of media education, is that every media text constructs a relationship between the real world and people's ideas about it. Media texts do not replicate these relationships; rather, they represent them to us. This aspect of media education raises questions about how people, places, events, ideas, etc., are represented in media texts and about how audiences judge and/or value the representations.

Reference: Bowker, J. (ed.), 1991. *Secondary Media Education: A curriculum statement*. London: British Film Institute.