



NFB FILM

STUDY GUIDE

ROUGHNECKS

(The Story of Oil Drillers)

Social Geography series

Black & White 22 minutes

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada, 1960.

Suggested Uses: Social Studies classes in intermediate, junior and senior high school.

The effective use of this film as a classroom aid will help students to gain a greater understanding of the many and varied factors affecting the growth of the oil industry in Canada. The method used in this film, however, departs from the usual procedure of illustrating the factual aspects of the geological and scientific processes involved.

Roughnecks deals with the life and work of oil drillers, and it is from their on-the-job point of view that the special character of the oil industry is portrayed. Drilling is at the very heart of the oil business: until the hole is made all the exploratory work merely suggests the presence of oil; when the hole has been drilled, all other steps in the process are developmental in character.

Students should be concerned with the particular character of this community of oil men, for through them they will learn to appreciate and be concerned with the industry as a whole. Without this empathy, facts about oil may remain isolated items of information, unassimilated by the student at the experiential level of understanding.

THEMES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The main themes of this film are interwoven in such a way as to draw out their various relationships.

The setting of *Roughnecks*—muskeg country in northwest Alberta—emphasizes that the underground geology of oil deposits is quite unrelated to surface geography or community development. The frequent rainstorms common in this area point up the physical hardships of living in improvised quarters and working at dangerous jobs on the derrick. Yet, the presence of multi-million-dollar technical equipment in such a rugged setting speaks eloquently of the oil business. The unpredictable aspects of the financial investment can thus be understood vividly.

The oil driller's life is that of a contemporary industrial nomad, and students will readily react to the inevitable conflict shown between the natural desire of all men for a stable home in an integrated community and the traditional life oil drillers must lead as they move about from place to place.

Oil drilling is a young industry in Canada, and it attracts young men of good physical strength and mechanical aptitude. As the operation of the drilling rig is described, these considerations give greater depth to the student's understanding of the subject.



SEQUENCE ANALYSIS

*Below is a sequence-by-sequence description of Roughnecks
—to help teachers make more effective use of the film.*

a) Introductory Maps:

1. Geological locations where oil may be found on the North American continent.
2. Geological map of oil deposits in Alberta, compared to a geographical map of the same area.
3. Location of Swan Hills, the setting for the film, 150 miles northwest of Edmonton.

b) Arrival of Oil Derrick (or drilling rig):

1. Bulldozer makes a road through bush and muskeg, and clears the location.
2. Derrick arrives, preceded by the drillers' house-trailers.

c) Description of the Drilling Process:

1. Introduction to each of the five members of the crew, and their duties.
2. Identification of the central character, the narrator, who tells of his life and work. Known as a "tool-pusher", he is in charge of the derrick's operation.

d) The Central Camp of an Important Oil Field:

1. Temporary character of an oil camp, with its shacks, trailers and movable houses where geologists, engineers and drilling specialists live.
2. The local café—social meeting-place of the oil men.
3. Absence of community services, schools, stores; physical discomfort of muddy streets; difficulties of raising a family under such conditions.

e) Changing the Drilling Bit:

1. Brief description of the purpose of this operation, and of the techniques involved.
2. Occupational hazards of "roughnecking" emphasized by night work during a rain storm.

f) The "Oil Scout":

1. An "oil scout", working for a rival company, spies on the derrick to learn whether oil has been found.
2. Coring operation: a piece of rock, brought up from below, reveals the presence of oil.
3. The race to convey information back to Edmonton, where a "land sale" is about to be held.

g) The "Land Sale":

1. The very high prices, paid at government-held auctions for the rights to drill for oil, point up the competitive aspects of this industry.
2. The investment is always a gamble for the financier.

h) "Bringing in" the Well:

1. After the first barrels are burnt, the well goes "on production".
2. Their work over, the oil drillers must move elsewhere to start another hole.

RELATED VISUAL AIDS

Filmstrips: PETROLEUM (NFB—B&W)
MINERAL AREAS (Maps of Canada series) (NFB—B&W)
THE GREAT PLAINS—INTRODUCTION (NFB—B&W)

