

You Can... **Learn about reading and writing from films**

Studying film enhances the children's awareness of the writers' craft. They will realise that film directors only know how characters are feeling, what the setting should be and how dramatic a particular moment in the story is, because someone wrote it down first. Ask the question: what did the author do to give the film director the information?

Thinking points

- Many authors visualise stories before they begin to write. How do your children plan their stories? Having them all planning stories in the same way may restrict their authorial instincts.
- It is unlikely that reading journals can usefully record all information suggested here at once. Build the journals up over time so that they become a useful source of inspiration as the reader becomes a writer.

Framework links

The work on this page supports the focus of Strands 7-12 ('read and write for a range of purposes on paper and on screen. '), in particular:

- Year 3: myths and legends or adventure stories will lend themselves particularly well to work with film as many films, including *Shrek*, will support these genres.
- Year 4: films set in fantasy worlds are too numerous to mention. There are the sci-fi films such as *Star Wars* and *Spiderman* as well as the cartoons like *Shrek* and *The Incredibles*.
- Year 5: many stories by significant children's authors have been transposed to film, as have a number of myths and legends. Look for films such as *Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*.
- Year 6: almost any film can be useful for studying fiction genres and extended narratives.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Use reference to films you have watched together to make a filmic distinction between story, plot and narrative.
 - The story is what the characters would say happened to them if they were asked. So, in *Finding Nemo* the story is about a little fish who is caught and put in a tank and his Dad who comes to rescue him.
 - The plot is the big theme, so the plot of *Finding Nemo* is the triumph of endurance, trust and co-operation.
 - The narrative is the combination of the story and the plot.
- Can children distinguish between story, plot and narrative in stories and books you read together? Can they distinguish between the narrator and the author?
- Ask children to keep reading journals of their independent reading books. In the journals, ask them to make notes about how authors show characters' reactions to events and ask them to look at dialogue, at actions and at reactions as well as at descriptions of the characters' reactions.
- Ask the children too to be aware of pace. *How does an author change and control the pace of events in a story?* In film, it's done with atmospheric music, with camera angle and with action. *How is it achieved in a story?* Point the children's attention at sentence constructions.
- In their journals, children should also make notes of information given about characters and settings. Many authors, particularly of children's books, choose not to write long and detailed description because readers often skim over them and pronounce them 'boring'. Ask children to focus on how they are given information about characters and settings without descriptions. Direct the children to look at the vocabulary and at the seemingly insignificant details we are told.