

**A review of curriculum resource material for the  
Film Education Working Group**

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## **Introduction**

### **1 The research brief**

As part of the Film Education Working Group's brief to examine ways in which education, formal and informal, might be used to enhance the 'cine-literacy' of the population, a review was commissioned of resources for use with children aged 5 to 18. The purpose of this review was to consider 'a range of classroom materials for film education aimed at age levels from 5 to 18, and [to] provide [the Working Group] with an independent assessment of factors such as the following:

- presentation, design, style, language;
- accessibility to intended audience;
- clarity of intended learning outcomes;
- range of pedagogies supported/proposed.'

The brief did not seek an independent assessment of the quality of the film-oriented content of this resource material, nor of the film scholarship it displayed. For this reason, no attempt has been made in this report to comment on the appropriateness of the selected resources to individual syllabus requirements, except in so far as this has a bearing on the other factors listed above.

### **2 How the brief was interpreted**

An initial trawl of between 40 and 50 publishing companies and other organisations involved in providing educational resources resulted in the selection and collection of approximately 90 educational resources. From this figure, a further selection of 40 resources was made (see Appendix 1), based on the following broad criteria:

- representation of all phases of education within the age range specified;
- representation of different types of resource;
- coverage of the different approaches taken.

These criteria form the basis for the commentary that follows.

No attempt was made to choose the 40 resource materials that were most widely used by teachers since this would have provided an imbalance in terms of the final selection (inevitably weighted towards Key Stage 4 and beyond) and would, in addition, have required further market research that was beyond the scope of the review. The final selection of resources was made on the basis of their representativeness, not necessarily because, within any particular type, the resource selected appeared to be the best example. There is therefore every likelihood that materials will have been omitted from this list that members of the working group consider to be particularly popular with teachers and/or superior to those reviewed: this omission should not, however, invalidate the general points made about the resources available.

Following this selection of 40 resources, a nominal division was made between materials to be reviewed in depth (first-tier resources) and those to be reviewed less intensively (second-tier resources): Appendix 1 presents this division. Approximately 15 of these resources were reviewed by five teachers/lecturers selected as typical of the resources' target audience. Between them, they covered the phases of education of the report. Other comments of a more anecdotal nature were incorporated, and the remaining resources were reviewed by Andrew Steeds, who also co-ordinated the overall report.

All reviewers were asked to construct their comments around two central questions:

- What are the teaching objectives of this material and to what extent has it met them?
- Who is the target audience, and how well has the material been constructed with this in mind?

The reviews on individual titles are gathered together in Appendix 2.

In practice, the division between first- and second-tier titles was not rigidly adhered to, and most resources were considered in some detail. These reviews form the basis of the commentary that

Review of curriculum resources for Film Education Working Group – , page 4 follows and are at the heart of the conclusions that end this report. Details of resources mentioned are given at the end of the section in question and in a **References** section at the end of the report.

### **3 Some considerations arising from the curriculum status of media studies**

The position of media studies and film studies on the school curriculum will be well known to members of the working group, and there is no need to rehearse it here. It is, however, perhaps worth mentioning two effects of this slightly uncertain curriculum status.

The first is the reluctance of many mainstream commercial publishing companies to produce resources to support the subject. These publishers, even those with a particular specialist interest in the subject, will only produce materials on which they expect to make an appropriate profit. On their own, they are unlikely to champion curriculum initiatives from which they do not expect commercial successes to develop. This is one reason why there are, proportionately, so few resources among those reviewed here that are produced by commercial publishers. It is clearly also the reason why there are so few materials published by such publishing companies without a specific examination focus – which effectively rules out any educational phase below Key Stage 4. The only phases that publishers seem confident about publishing materials for are GCSE and beyond – and here only because, given the general dearth of materials, a resource principally targeted at one syllabus may legitimately be presented as appropriate to a number of others, even to higher education courses. The back-cover copy of many of these titles is an illustration of this purported polyvalence.

Why should the reluctance of commercial publishers to enter the field of media studies, let alone film studies, be seen as an intrinsically bad thing for the subject? After all, their involvement in other curriculum areas is not necessarily a guarantee of quality in terms of the materials published. One reason is that a strong commercial publishing presence makes it easier for other organisations with a commitment to a curriculum area to provide the resource materials that reflect their particular interest in that area. Without this presence, it is often left to those organisations to provide the kind of materials the commercial publishers would otherwise publish (and would often publish with higher production values), as well as producing the materials to which they are centrally committed. There is a danger, therefore, that such organisations are distracted from doing what they do best by the need to do something they are often not geared up to do.

This coincides with the second effect of the uncertain curriculum status of the subject. With most established curriculum areas, an audience of teachers skilled in a certain subject and confident in their ability to deliver it can be taken for granted. This is not necessarily the case for media studies or film studies, and certainly not for other curriculum areas where film or other media might be used. A small number of teachers will be deeply committed to the subject and completely at ease with it; most, however, will be interested in the idea of teaching the subject, but lacking in the confidence to do so. For this reason, there is as much a need to teach the teachers about the subject as there is to provide these teachers with materials with which to teach their students.

The effect of this on the publishing operation is that, implicitly or explicitly, the materials produced will address teachers as much as their students. Teacher confidence cannot be guaranteed in the same way as it can with English or maths, so the idea of a course book becomes a more dubious proposition even than it may be with those subjects. At the same time, teachers need something they can teach with, as well as an explanation of how they should teach it, so any company publishing materials in this area is often addressing two audiences simultaneously and attempting to do two things at the same time – which involves considerable skills of structure and organisation. It is small surprise that so many materials fail to measure up to the task.

### **4 The structure of this report**

This report is divided into three main sections:

- The first of these deals with some general issues relating to the publication of resources for film education and arising from an assessment of the different types of resource gathered together for this report.
- The second section examines different approaches taken by these resources and comments on the effectiveness of each.
- The third section examines the classroom resources collected for the report and considers them by educational phase. A more detailed review of the individual resources may be found at the end of this report in Appendix 2.

Throughout this report, the terms 'student', 'teacher' and 'school' have been used for the sake of simplicity, although resources are clearly aimed at 'children' and 'pupils' and may be delivered by 'lecturers' working in 'colleges'.

## Section 1 General comments on types of resource

### 1 Introduction

Film poses two particular problems to those publishing educational resources for it, the first of which relates to the consumption (or viewing) of film, the second to the construction (or making) of film:

- Given that the essence of film is the moving image, how can a static written text adequately address all aspects of its subject?
- How can the tasks and skills involved in making a film be adequately represented or replicated, given the complexity of the operation and the sophistication of the equipment involved?

How a publishing organisation answers these questions determines the nature of the resource it publishes, and the materials reviewed in this report demonstrate the wide range of answers that publishers active in this area have come up with. They range from the standard textbook to the interactive CD-ROM, with source books and resource packs of varying degrees of complexity clustering between these twin extremes. It is worth considering some of the issues raised by these different types of published resource.

### 2 The course book

The course book is the standard response of many publishing organisations to a defined curriculum or syllabus. Some curriculum areas lend themselves more obviously to this approach than others: there will be fewer foreign language or maths teachers, for example, arguing against the appropriateness of the course book as a medium of instruction than there will be history or English teachers. Even in those curriculum areas where teachers have greater reservations about their appropriateness, however, course books are still seen as the core publishing solution. If nothing else, publishing organisations know that there are large numbers of teachers in any curriculum area that appreciate the support (real or imagined) offered by course books, and that it is these teachers who are more likely to buy resources in any case than those who can confidently teach without course books.

Film studies is not an examined subject below A level, and media studies becomes one only at GCSE. There are unlikely, therefore, to be many course books below this level, and a quick glance at the materials reviewed for the first three key stages of formal education will bear this out. None of them could be seen as a course book; indeed, there were no course books at this level that *could* have been selected for this report. The course books emerge only at Key Stage 4 and beyond, where there is an increasing number of examination syllabuses to choose between. There are, however, quite significant differences between many of these syllabuses so that even at this level, short of nailing its colours to one particular syllabus mast, a course book has to try to address as broad a church as possible.

The number of candidates on individual syllabuses is still relatively small for effective course-book publishing, which explains both the attempt of many of these books to appeal to a number of different courses and also the relatively low production values of much of the material. One or two publishing companies have, however, attempted to circumvent this problem by commissioning the chief examiner of a particular syllabus to author or co-author a book (Wall and Walker, 1997; Connell et al, 1996). The extent to which this works will be discussed under the appropriate age range, but suffice to say here that the skills that make an excellent examiner are not necessarily the skills that make an excellent writer. (The value of a named examiner to the marketing operation of a publishing organisation is, of course, a completely different matter.)

Even someone with a high regard for course books would have to concede that, by and large, the media form that is dealt with least successfully in the books under review is film. None of the materials reviewed comes with ancillary material (e.g. video, cassette, CD-ROM), so the course books have to provide a text-based solution to the first question posed at the start of this section. The solution tends to be along one of the following lines:

- to discuss the narrative structure of film, thereby enabling a teacher to read it as a book;
- to see it as the visual representation of a written text, thereby enabling a teacher to compare it to a book;

- to discuss film as an industry, thereby allowing teachers to concentrate on the institutions that control the medium.

Of course, each of these approaches is a valid line of enquiry, but on their own they offer a limited and limiting account of film. This limitation is, however, intrinsic to the course book format and, although there are more course books reviewed here than any other type of resource, there are one or two only that succeed in transcending the limits of their form.

### **3 The resource pack**

The resource pack appears to represent a genuine attempt to deal with the apparent contradiction of providing a written resource for a moving-image medium. Depending on its component parts, it enables students to see what is being discussed, to try out some of the techniques mentioned, or to perform a combination of the two.

At its simplest, the resource pack involves the production of a teacher's booklet (or pack), most often with photocopiable pages, and the provision of an accompanying video. There are six or seven examples of this kind of pack among the resources gathered for this report. Mostly they succeed in their primary objectives, which are to broaden the scope of the enquiry and to increase the authenticity of the exercise. However, the extent to which they succeed is dependent on a number of factors:

- the content and quality of the video itself;
- the way in which the video is referred to in the text;
- the packaging of the material.

The first of these seems self-evident, but to select, produce and clear permission to publish the material requested for a video is no simple matter. Issues of cost and copyright can rule out first-choice material, as a result of which the teaching apparatus may have to be reformulated to accommodate the material that *is* available. Some organisations are better placed than others to secure the video material they want, but even they do not always achieve this, and their video material can be of uneven quality.

The textual reference is key to the successful use of all resource material, and too often insufficient attention is paid to this – in part maybe because the final video material is not necessarily what was originally requested. For teachers to use such material successfully, they need to be forewarned that it is required for a particular section and also given an indication of the stage at which the material should be introduced, and how. The danger, of course, is that this very process of cross-referencing imposes one particular route through the material and might be seen to detract from one of the strengths of the resource pack approach, which is to provide a flexible package for teachers to interpret as they choose.

As far as the final point of packaging is concerned, the materials selected here represent the various possible approaches, and illustrates some of the problems involved. Grahame (1998) incorporates its video in a ring-binder, while Wall and White (1997) embed it in a specially created plastic case. Both work to a greater or lesser extent, but these options are more expensive than the simpler approach, which is to shrink-wrap the video and booklet together and to leave to the teacher the problem of how the resource is stored thereafter. There is an obvious danger here that what was conceived of as an integrated teaching package immediately disintegrates on first opening.

The other resource packs among the materials reviewed in this report are accompanied by separate cards, templates and posters or contain such template material within their own pages. Such materials are intended either for consideration (e.g. posters, photographs) or for practical use (e.g. cutting up images for a storyboard, constructing materials for optical illusions). Those that are to be worked on practically have not been trialled as part of this report, and it is therefore not possible to comment on how successfully they have presented their instructions and how easy these are to follow. There is a danger that such material is not subjected to as rigorous proof-reading, or trialling, as other elements of the pack and that the ability of the target audience to follow guidelines or instructions on photocopiable sheets is taken for granted.

At their best, resource packs can give students some insight into specific skills or functions, provide visual examples and present carefully constructed tasks, supported by further ancillary material, which enable students to have first-hand experience of the subject under discussion. Multi-component resources are notoriously easy to get wrong, however, and the most successful here are those that have managed to keep even apparently complex arrangements simple.

#### **4 The source book**

To a certain extent, source books attempt to answer neither of the two questions that start this section. Indeed, since they do not contain activities as such and may not even be intended as a teaching resource, there is an argument for saying that they should form no part of this report at all. They have been included, however, partly because of the use teachers in the first two key stages make of resources and partly because, at the other end of the teaching age range, teachers at A level are as likely to use a 'pick 'n' mix' policy to select teaching resources as they are to follow a course book.

Any subject in its infancy demands a certain ingenuity of its teachers. With so few 'bespoke' materials available, teachers often have to construct their own bank of resources, if not their own curriculum, drawing material where they can find it. Such material may be in the form of television programmes recorded for later use, information downloaded from the Internet, articles taken from trade or general magazines, and publications aimed at the general reader or at a different audience from the one with which the teacher plans to use them.

A number of publications have been included in this report to represent this type of resource (the report has not taken into consideration the journals and publications that a teacher with an interest in the subject could usefully consult). The source book is, however, more difficult to evaluate as a teaching tool than the other three types of resource listed here: different teachers will use it more 'differently' than they will the other three; the principal audience of such source books is not necessarily the student; and the main objectives of the book may not be of a formal educational kind. Nevertheless an attempt has been made to give some idea of the educational value of the materials listed.

#### **5 The CD-ROM and the interactive package**

Of all the types of resource under review here, CD-ROMs and other interactive packages would seem ideal for answering the second question posed at the front of this section. There are packages among those reviewed here that allow students to work on sequencing images, synchronising music and moving image, editing image and sound, creating a storyboard.

The computer is perfectly placed to provide a simulation of this type of activity, particularly because the way students are asked to work approximates to the way those in the industry work. In addition to the other factors, mentioned already, that make any classroom resource successful or not (e.g. the quality of the teaching/learning content, the way in which this is structured and presented to its audience, the ease with which these materials may be used) there are crucial issues specific to computer software. A surprisingly large number of software packages cause computers to crash, cannot be opened, or are so heavy on memory that the software can be run only slowly by all but the most powerful computers (a number of resources de-selected themselves for this review for reasons of this kind). In addition, neither teacher nor student can be relied upon to have the requisite ICT skills to make the fullest use of such material. It is remarkably easy for someone to be apparently working on some software package but in fact just running it without any real interaction.

Among the resources collected for review, there were few examples of interactive publications. Of the four selected, only Grahame (1996) and C4/BFI (1997) were specifically targeted at the media studies/film studies area of the curriculum – and Grahame (1996) presents a simulation of the moving image rather than a real account of the same. Of the other two, one (Macaulay, 1998) works really only as a reference point for information on aspects of the machinery involved in moving-image production, while the other (Nickelodeon et al, 1998) is a useful teaching resource that has limited connection with the processes involved in producing a film.

It is likely that more and more resources will be produced in the coming years in this format, as both publishers and users become more confident and familiar with the technology that drives them.

Clearly, they are unlikely in the foreseeable future to replace books as the primary source of instruction or even information, but they can be linked to books in such a way as to move the subject off the page and into an authentic simulation of a real industry activity. By this means, publishing organisations will provide a package of theory and practice to satisfy the student while remaining within the reach of the more technophobic teacher.

*Resources referred to in this section*

C4/BFI (1997) *Backtracks – interactive CD-ROM*. London: C4/BFI.

Connell, B., Brigley, J. and Edwards, M. (1996) *Examining the Media*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Grahame, J. (1996) *Picture Power*. London: English and Media Centre.

Grahame, J. (1998) *The Soap Pack*. London: English and Media Centre.

Macaulay, D. (1998) *The New Way Things Work (CD-ROM)*. London: Dorling Kindersley.

Nickelodeon, Film Education, UIP and Paramount (1998) *The Rugrats, interactive CD-ROM*. London: Film Education.

Wall, I. and White, A. (1995) *The Film Industry Pack*. London: Film Education.

Wall, P. and Walker, P. (1997) *Media Studies for GCSE*. London: Collins.

## **Section 2 Different approaches taken to film education**

### **1 Introduction**

Before looking more closely at the resources in terms of the age ranges at which they are targeted, it is worth considering the range of possible approaches that might be taken by the resources collected for review, and how effective these are, given the nature of the subject and the level of teacher confidence. For the purposes of this report, the following approaches have been identified (although of course they allow for combinations), each of which will be briefly discussed in turn:

- addressing the student directly;
- addressing the teacher directly;
- teaching about film;
- teaching through film.

### **2 Addressing the student directly**

Directly addressing the student is the route preferred by most commercial publishers. The approach rests on two main assumptions. The first of these is that the main bulk or essence of the subject may satisfactorily be contained within one publication; a 'core' text may therefore be posited, which will form the focus of the learning experience, with other materials introduced at the teacher's discretion. This is the reason why this approach is favoured by commercial publishers: teaching from a core text means the purchase of one copy of each text (ideally) for each student, and such multiple purchases in turn mean longer print runs for publishers, higher production values and larger profits.

The second assumption is that this material will be mediated by teachers sufficiently confident in their knowledge of the subject to be able to understand immediately what the publication is attempting to do and to be able to recognise the stages mapped out in the learning process. This is the reason why the text book directed at the student is the chosen publishing approach for most of the core curriculum areas: writer and publisher may justifiably assume that the material will be mediated by someone with either specialist knowledge of the subject or practical experience of teaching it, and probably (in Scotland, certainly) both.

Neither of these assumptions works in the case of film education. In the first place, there is no film education curriculum below A level, so there is no defined subject. Insofar as it forms part of media studies at GCSE, it becomes part of a defined subject at that level but, as the previous section indicated, it is generally the part of that subject that lends itself least well to treatment in the traditional course book fashion (Nicholas and Price, 1998 illustrates this point particularly well). And, in the second place, teachers' confidence in the subject may by no means be taken for granted. There are, of course, supremely confident teachers who may have long championed the cause of film education and promoted its place in their particular schools or colleges. These are, however, the exception rather than the rule; the majority of teachers may be attracted to the idea of film education, may even be aware of the curriculum merit it could have for them, but are likely to be intimidated by the apparent need to acquire a new vocabulary and a new critical methodology. This may be one reason why there are course books like Wall and Walker (1997), which contains much more text than would normally be expected in a book aimed at a student, and where the text clearly appears to be addressing the teacher as much as the student – leading to a confusion of tone that gets in the way of the subject.

This last point pinpoints a further difficulty of this approach. Materials directly addressed at students may reasonably assume a familiarity with, indeed an enthusiasm for, their subject matter. What they cannot assume, however, is a familiarity with the language and theory of film as a subject – which means that all materials of this kind have to re-educate as much as to educate.

### **3 Addressing the teacher directly**

As soon as photocopying became a cheap and easy option, the photocopiable resource, traditionally addressed at the teacher, became the means by which commercial publishers attempted to make a

virtue out of necessity. Particularly in curriculum areas where the student numbers are small, this is the publishing route now most commonly taken: it offers a means of providing course material without incurring the level of production costs involved in providing course book material.

There are many reasons why this is the approach most suited to film education: by its very nature, the subject may be uneasily tied down to the printed page; the subject involves a different medium, which needs to be addressed in conjunction with the written text, so a mixed approach will be called for; it is taught by teachers of varying degrees of confidence; and even the most confident teachers are likely to adopt a 'pick'n'mix' match approach to the subject, to which the photocopiable resource is best suited. Encompassing all these reasons is the fact that it is also the approach that most closely resembles the approach taken by INSET materials: training in a subject (or an aspect of a subject) accompanied by materials for teachers to work on themselves or use with their students.

There are a number of drawbacks with this approach. The material has to be genuinely a teacher resource, and the photocopiable material genuinely material to be worked on or from: Kruger and Wall (1995), for example, would appear to be a photocopiable resource only because the publishers were not convinced that the teacher interest and the student numbers were there in sufficient quantity for them to provide a course book – all the pages are directed at the student, and teachers who wanted to base their teaching on it would have to photocopy the complete pack. However successful it may be as an account of its subject, it is an inadequate photocopiable teacher resource. A much better example is Ashbury et al (1998), where the division between what the teacher needs to be told about and what the student needs to work from has been more carefully thought through – even though it lets itself down by not changing the mode of address as it moves from one to the other (the worksheets directed at the student address the teacher as much as the student, often in notational form, e.g. 'Read various film reviews. Students report back ...').

A further potential drawback is one of organisation and presentation. Falcon (1994) and Carroll (1996) stand as examples of first-rate materials inadequately realised. The division between material directed at the teacher and material directed at the student is confusing in the former and over-complex in the latter, which requires skills of organisation unlikely to be possessed by all but the most committed teacher. Again, Ashbury et al (1998) serves as a better example.

Despite these potential pitfalls, the photocopiable teacher resource would seem to be the most appropriate approach to be taken to film education, both because of the fledgling nature of the subject and because of the difficulty of confining it to the page. Teachers could be taught about the subject and offered a route through the student material without feeling that their position was being undermined by assumptions made in the student text. It comes as something of a surprise, therefore, to see how few of the resources collected for this report are of this kind: many are photocopiable, but few have attempted directly to address the need of teachers to be introduced to the subject and guided through the material.

#### **4 Teaching about film/teaching through film**

Most of the resources published for Key Stage 4 and beyond attempt to teach students about film, whether this be as part of a media studies course or as an A level syllabus or GNVQ examination. The effectiveness of the approaches these resources take is examined in the next section. Below this level, for reasons already given, film has no defined curriculum, so it comes as no surprise that the books on the subject, like Platt (1992) and Wordsworth (1998), are source books intended as much for library use and the general reader as for direct use in the classroom.

Given the overloaded nature of the curriculum and the demands currently made on teachers' 'spare time' by government initiatives, there seems little point either in campaigning for a stronger presence for film and media studies further down the curriculum or in producing resources that aim to teach about them. However, there seems every point in providing resources that use film in order to help teachers deliver other parts of the curriculum, thereby legitimising film as a medium of instruction even if not as a subject for instruction.

There are a number of obvious advantages to this approach. The first is that it enables teachers to vary the mode of instruction, something that tends to reap educational rewards. The second is that it uses a medium of instruction with which students and teachers are likely to be very familiar; in most

circumstances this kind of familiarity enhances the learning/teaching experience rather than detracts from it. The third is that it familiarises the teacher with the idea of working *with* film, which is one of the first steps on the way to feeling confident about teaching *about* film.

The surprising thing about the resources gathered for this report is that – leaving aside those that try to address parts of the English curriculum through film – so few of them attempt to do so. Such resources appear to be published only by the specialist ‘film’ publishing organisations (BFI, Film Education and MOMI), and even these tend to focus principally on the English programme of study. Publications like Carroll (1996) and Staples (1997) indicate the possibilities afforded by this approach, even if neither of them is entirely successful.

In the absence of a defined syllabus lower down the school curriculum, this approach would appear to be worthy of further investigation by anyone wanting to promote film education within schools. The two important caveats are that the overall learning objectives of such resources must be made clear and considerable thought has to be given to the way in which the teacher is steered through the material.

*Resources referred to in this section*

- Ashbury, R., Helsby, W. and O'Brien, M. (1998) *Teaching African Cinema*. London: BFI.  
Carroll, T. (1996) *Media in Art*. London: BFI.  
Falcon, R. (1994) *Classified!* London: BFI.  
Nicholas, J. and Price, J. (1998) *Advanced Studies in Media*. Walton-on-Thames: Nelson.  
Platt, R. (1992) *Eyewitness Guide: Cinema*. London: Dorling Kindersley.  
Staples, T. (1997) *Film in Victorian Britain*. London: BFI.  
Kruger, S. and Wall, I. (1997) *Media Pack*. Walton-on-Thames: Nelson.  
Wall, P. and Walker, P. (1997) *Media Studies for GCSE*. London: Collins.  
Wordsworth, L. (1989) *Film and Television*. Hove: Wayland.

## Section 3 Overview of classroom resources for film education by key stage

### 1 Introduction

As a subject with a defined syllabus, media studies does not exist below GCSE, and film studies begins only at A level , currently with one examination board only. Below GCSE the curriculum, as defined in the National Curriculum requirements for individual curriculum areas, carries no mention of media education and refers to ‘the media’ in one or two curriculum areas only (most obviously, English and information technology).

This absence of a curriculum reference explains in large part the comparative lack of classroom resources below Key Stage 4 and the general reluctance of many teachers to incorporate aspects of media education into their schemes of work. However comprehensible, seen in these terms, this disinclination reflects too narrow an understanding of what is involved in ‘teaching the media’. As will be seen, the vast majority of the resources selected for review in this report are resources that aspire to teach *about* the media – relatively few use the media to teach about other subjects. This is the line largely taken by those resources that are available below Key Stage 4, where publishers have recognised the value of harnessing children’s interest in, and familiarity with, the media in order to focus on one particular curriculum area – most successfully, history. Such resources stand as evidence of the possibility and validity of publishing materials with a media or film component, and they provide lessons for organisations publishing media resources at all levels. At Key Stage 4 and beyond, for example, if there is much more material available than there is in the first three key stages, there is precious little that looks at how film or other media forms may be used to teach *about* other subjects.

In the phase-related discussion that follows, Key Stages 1 and 2 have been grouped together, while separate attention is paid to Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (and GCSE) and all teaching post-16. The resources that provide the basis for the comments made are listed at the end of each phase.

### 2 Key Stages 1 & 2

The materials gathered for review for these key stages demonstrate two fairly predictable points about this educational phase and the extent to which it is supported by resources that use film:

- Only one of the resources is produced by a commercial publisher.
- With the arguable exception of that one resource, all other resources use film as a medium for teaching about another subject; they are not, overtly at least, concerned to promote a media studies curriculum.

These two points are clearly related. Commercial publishers have little interest in publishing materials for which there is no defined curriculum focus, and below Key Stage 4 film and media studies could be said to fit in only incidentally into existing programmes of study. A commercially produced resource that had film as its prime focus would have to be targeted with great accuracy at defined areas of the primary curriculum before any publisher would feel confident about producing it. In this respect, it is significant that the only resource considered here that is published by a commercial organisation (Wordsworth, 1998) is essentially a library resource that would be useful for individual students planning a project but would have to have considerable teacher adaptation to work as a teaching resource.

The absence of commercial publishers leaves the way clear for those organisations that exist, in one form or another, to promote film in schools and outside; it does not, however, resolve the problem of finding a place in an already busy curriculum for any resources these organisations might produce. As a result, the resources collected for review take one main curriculum area as their main focus in order to allow teachers to incorporate them with ease into their planning. On the basis of this selection, the two most popular curriculum areas are history and English.

O’Brien (1996), Pearce (1998) and Staples (1997) take history as their major focus, the first two slotting broadly into the study unit on Britain since 1930, the third siting itself most obviously with the unit on Victorian Britain. O’Brien (1996) makes few concessions to its target audience: the language level is at the top end of the age range and the text is laid out, however cleanly, with a sophistication beyond

most children of this age. The booklet's attempt to condense the history of cinema into 28 pages and to make it accessible to Key Stage 2 children seems over-ambitious, and it is only partly redeemed by the four-page pull-out section of activities. Even here, the activities are not obviously differentiated from the narrative text, and the extent to which they would work outside MOMI itself is questionable. Pearce (1998) is more successful and contains a more even balance between narrative exposition and suggestions for activities. These last are carefully chosen, 'small-scale' affairs which, at their best, both make key points about the period in question and also introduce basic media studies issues. There is also a clear intention to personalise the information, which makes it more accessible. The major reservation, however, is that insufficient attention has been paid to the design of the resource, and the sequence of some of the activities is not immediately clear.

Staples (1997) is a more ambitious publication. At its centre is a video collection of 32 films made in Victorian Britain, upon which the text bases activities that focus firmly on the history curriculum, but with many a sideways glance in the direction of other curriculum areas (most obviously English). The resource boasts a wealth of information – on the beginnings of cinema and on the films itself – and supplements this with, for example, contemporary posters for the teacher to photocopy and use. The result is a fascinating resource, but one of uncertain application to the realities of the primary classroom. Part of the problem is that there is so much for any teacher to assimilate who was not already highly committed to working with film, and the point at which it fits into the curriculum is not self-evident (some matrix of curriculum relevance would have helped, even if it were as simple as that used in Pearce, 1998). However, part of the problem might also be that, despite being a resource that uses film to access other areas of the curriculum, there is a presupposition of some familiarity with the basic language of film and the techniques of reading it.

A number of resources here choose English as their focal point. Roberts (1998) is a topical attempt to address the issue of literacy and to provide materials that will dovetail neatly with the National Literacy Strategy. There is a detailed mapping of the resource's contents against the Strategy on one of the early pages, which is a useful planning device, although by no means completely clear. The activities themselves are well judged, and the film extracts carefully selected for the target audience, mixing the very recent with some older material (e.g. *The Railway Children*). All in all, there is much to commend it as a resource, although it does have its weaknesses: the division of material into two sections is not made clear (this is not helped by all pages having the same weight of heading); the pages themselves are overflowing with text and images; the line lengths are preposterously long for this age range (there are frequently more than 20 words to the line); insufficient attention has been paid to the way in which a student would progress through these pages.

A different approach is taken by Reid (1994) where the focus is on storytelling, but the main intention is to introduce a media studies curriculum. As such, the resource fits uncomfortably with current curricular prescriptions, but it is worth examining for its various strengths and weaknesses. Foremost among its strengths is the quality of the video material itself: just over 20 minutes long, and with no extract lasting longer than six minutes, this nevertheless offers a wide range of source material which is tightly tied into the student activities. Another strength is the seriousness of its endeavour: each unit and activity is given a laborious curricular reference that cannot help but convince the user of the educational credentials of the material. However, that strength also points to a weakness: in the attempt to legitimise a media education curriculum, less time has been spent on helping to navigate the uncommitted teacher through the teacher's booklet. As a result, poor signposting and an over-austere design bury the interesting teaching ideas in an undifferentiated text.

The two remaining resources appear more immediately interactive or practical and more diffuse in their curricular application. Lachowicz (1997) contains material that would meet elements of the history, science, design and technology and English programmes of study but is essentially an attempt to give students a practical insight into the basic principles of moving-image technology and optical illusions. It describes nine acts of optical illusion, each of which is accompanied by a photocopyable template that enables the student to replicate the device described. In its subject matter it is well within the reach of both key stages, but the language of the instructions and the design of the pages lift it to the top end of this combined age range, if not beyond it. The soundness of its premise – a simple idea, with relatively few examples and activities – is thus undermined by the quality of its realisation. Nickelodeon et al (1998) attempts to harness a popular moving-image resource to basic principles of numeracy and literacy, and does so largely successfully. The activities and tasks are well differentiated (the CD-ROM format is a better vehicle for differentiation than the printed publication) and the range of activities impressive. Less impressively, the CD-ROM is not an example of total user

clarity, and there are irritating aspects to its construction. For example, it is only possible to start by being introduced to the Rugrats characters, the music becomes rapidly insufferable and it is not always that easy to move around within the program. However, for short and carefully focused tasks (that might, for example, fit neatly into the time allocated for literacy or numeracy), this is a useful resource. The extent to which it uses film, however, as opposed to students' familiarity with characters from a film, is questionable, even though there is one activity zone given over to making a movie. Students and teachers using this resource might end up knowing more about *The Rugrats* (presumably the manufacturers' prime concern) but not much more even about how a film in that genre is put together.

#### **General comments**

It is difficult to draw conclusions from such a disparate collection of resources beyond the obvious point that there is both a need and an opportunity for film-related materials that are closely focused at particular programmes of study. The extent to which it is possible to promote a media education curriculum at this age range is limited and will in all likelihood continue to be so for some time, but there is considerable scope in mobilising film to serve the educational requirements of other curriculum areas.

Insofar as these resources represent the first attempt to do just this, they contain lessons for those that might be preparing the second wave. Among these are the following:

#### **Resources:**

- are more likely to be used if a clear illustration is given of how they fit into a teacher's curriculum planning;
- often succeed more when they attempt to do less;
- should not underestimate teachers' lack of familiarity with the language of media education and film studies;
- should be designed with the reading age and interest level of the target audience firmly in mind;
- should be produced with a clear view as to the separate uses different people (i.e. teachers, students) are to make of them, and these different uses clearly reflected in, for example, a differentiated page design.

#### *Resources reviewed*

Lachowicz, M. (1997) *Making Pictures Move*. London: MOMI.

Nickelodeon, Film Education, UIP and Paramount (1998) *The Rugrats, interactive CD-ROM*. London: Film Education.

O'Brien, M. (1996) *Picturegoer*. London: MOMI.

Pearce, H. (1998) *Entertaining the Nation – Britain since 1930: educational resource pack*. London: MOMI.

Reid, M. (1994) *Goodies and Baddies*. Edinburgh/London: SFC/BFI.

Roberts, J. (1998) *Film and Literacy*. London: Film Education.

Staples, T. (1997) *Film in Victorian Britain*. London: BFI.

Wordsworth, L. (1998) *Film and Television*. Hove: Wayland.

### 3 Key Stage 3

Key Stage 3 is something of a neglected educational phase, certainly as far as media studies and film education are concerned. Few publications will limit themselves to Key Stage 3 exclusively (of those listed below, only Carroll, 1996 is pitched at this level, but this is a resource that is targeted at art and media studies; it is only in art that it is pitched at Key Stage 3) and, with GCSE media studies and the media component in English looming at Key Stage 4, the simplest approach appears to be to provide materials for the higher age range and merely state that they are 'appropriate' for Key Stage 3, on the understanding that the teacher would need to work further on differentiating the materials. For these two reasons, the account given here of this educational phase should be read in conjunction with comments made about Key Stage 4.

Unlike materials produced for Key Stages 1 and 2, there are materials produced for Key Stage 3 that focus firmly on film as subject and as medium of instruction. One such, Platt (1992), published in association with MOMI, gives no indication of its actual target audience. It is one of those source books for which its publisher has become famous, and, in the absence of other film-specific material at this age, it is likely to be pillaged by students with an interest in the area. However, it is of limited use – despite protestations on its cover that it supports the National Curricula in the four countries of the British Isles. This is a seductively beautiful book, but one that would be difficult to use in the classroom and which is, in fact, by no means as accessible (in terms of content, language and even design) as might be expected.

Wylie (1995), although aimed at the top end of this age range, is worth singling out for attention because it is one of only two resources (in all those gathered for review in this report) targeted at disabled students. Arising out of work the author has undertaken with hearing-impaired students, it is an attempt to demonstrate the rich potential of video to these students and their teachers. There is thus a missionary fervour about it which translates into an immediacy and an urgency that serve its purpose well. As much teacher-training manual as student activity book, it offers a series of highly practical tasks that might shame some of the Key Stage 4 and Post-16 material. Unfortunately, however, the booklet reaches out beyond teachers of hearing-impaired students and addresses itself to any teacher needing to be convinced of the value of moving-image work, and as a result ends up coming across as just another manual. It also does not help matters that it attempts, in the space of 32 pages, to move teachers from a position of complete lack of confidence to complete confidence. As a practical overview of the subject for an often neglected audience, however, it is difficult to fault.

Grahame et al's photocopiable resource pack (1998) – although, in its focus on television, somewhat outside the scope of this report – is nevertheless a publication that takes full advantage of students' familiarity with a particular TV genre and gives an impressively comprehensive account of it. Only the first of its six units is aimed directly at Key Stage 3 students, but this works well as an introduction to the genre and as a means of encouraging a more critical attitude towards the reading of television. Practical activities are well mixed with more research-based tasks, and the level of activities seem well judged. Not all the exposition works equally well, however: the account of the visual conventions of soap production, for example, is not especially helpful as an explanation of the significance of the various camera shots. Also, the fact that the six units are quite clearly addressed at different phases of education is likely to work against the publication as much as for it.

The interactive CD-ROM produced by C4 and the BFI (1997) is a media studies resource that has ready application to other curriculum areas, including ICT, art and English. Conceived as a basic exploration of the relationship between sound and image in the moving image, it offers a variegated set of projects for students to work on at many levels. It requires a fairly powerful system to operate at optimal level, and its initial instructions and teacher guidelines are by no means transparently clear, but, once embroiled, extrication is the problem. As mentioned in Section 1, the CD-ROM format lends itself ideally to this kind of work; this is a sophisticated package that students and teachers will appreciate and which gives students hands-on experience that is an authentic replication of the industry activity. It has tremendous value in developing ICT skills and is a wonderful illustration of its subject that cannot fail to inspire students.

Two other resources here use film to teach about other curriculum areas. Carroll (1996) boldly attempts to link media studies with art, and does so with immense sophistication and a glossy production. No other resource reviewed boasts such high-quality paper, nor such perfect reproduction of its images! The activities are well pitched at the target audience, and the range of tasks impressive, from the

Review of curriculum resources for Film Education Working Group – , page 17 analytical/reflective to the highly practical. Nevertheless, the resource is less successful than it should be, and its weaknesses are instructive. One is that it is far too complicated, presenting a teaching resource that contains so many components (teacher's notes, image banks, information sheets, activity sheets, video and separate resource sheets) that a teacher would have difficulty navigating their way through it. In its attempt to make that process of navigation easier, the resource displays another weakness, which is its preparatory referencing. While it is, of course, important for teachers to be able to place a resource in their curriculum planning, this is an example of one that seems a little over-obsessed with the need to provide a chapter-and-verse curriculum reference at all times. The effect is to build up a bank of 'ingredients' and preparatory information that militates against the quality of the material itself.

Poppy et al (1997?), arguably on safer ground, focuses on the English curriculum, although it might more successfully be used as a media studies or English literature resource. It is linked very closely to its accompanying video and provides a wealth of information and activities. This is a resource with which many teachers who would otherwise be reluctant to use film in their teaching would feel at ease, and it strikes the right balance of illuminating the written text more than the film. It is not, however, without weaknesses: although the text is addressed at the student, it would have to be heavily mediated by the teacher to all but the top end of this key stage, and the status of the separate activities and tasks is by no means evident – far too much use is made of the bullet-point list, for example, so that its purpose becomes completely unclear. Fewer, more tightly structured, tasks would have made for a stronger package.

*Resources reviewed:*

C4/BFI (1997) *Backtracks – interactive CD ROM*. London: C4/BFI.

Carroll, T. (1996) *Media in Art*. London: BFI.

Grahame, J. (1998) *The Soap Pack*. London: English and Media Centre.

Platt, R. (1992) *Eyewitness Guide: Cinema*. London: Dorling Kindersley.

Poppy, J., Russell, A., O'Connor, T. and Dennis, G. (1997?) *Screening Shakespeare*. London: Film Education.

Wylie, D. (1995) *Video is Easy*. London: MOMI.

## 4 Key Stage 4

This is the educational phase in which media studies comes into its own, with clearly stated inclusion in the GCSE English syllabuses and separate examination among most groups. Seeing that the subject has an established foothold on the curriculum, more organisations are prepared to risk publishing resources for it, and there is therefore a plethora of course books and resource packs available for interested teachers. So, at least, it would seem; for, after the desert of the three previous key stages, the range of educational fare available at Key Stage 4 resembles a veritable oasis. The reality, however, is that much of this choice is illusory, that similar approaches are being presented in seemingly different resources and that, as far as film education itself is concerned, there is in fact no dramatic increase in provision.

No attempt has been made in the review of the resources that follows to comment on the extent to which the resources fulfil specific syllabus requirements – unless one of the teacher reviewers made particular mention of this. Instead, the resources have been divided into three broad categories: those focusing on another curriculum area; those devoted to the media studies examinations; and those offering a more practical hands-on approach to the subject.

### Resources using film/media studies to teach another subject

The four publications that fall into this category themselves divide neatly into two that focus on individual books (Cooper, 1998; Broadbent, 1997) and two that provide a complete approach to one specific subject (Hamlin & Watkinson, 1998; Russell & Poppy, 1996).

The film of the book is, of course, one of the commonest ways in which film is used in the English classroom, but the main focus of Cooper (1998) is the history syllabus, and its main enquiry the relevant status of different kinds of historical evidence and the extent to which we construct our understanding of past events from these. It was accompanied by a programme on BBC2's *Learning Zone*, which is arguably a clearer resource than the printed matter itself. Not that this is unsatisfactory: many of the tasks and activities it presents are clear and pertinent, but completing them adequately would require considerable familiarity with the film on which they are based, the book on which the film is based and the various diaries, biographies and poems from which the book draws inspiration. Without this familiarity the resource works well, but essentially as an introduction to its subject. Broadbent (1997) attempts to get round this problem by providing the text of the book in the same resource as the activities and assignments, which are themselves based on the film as much as on the book. The result is something of a hybrid, with the resource material occupying over one-third of the total book: two separate publications might have made for a more effective teaching resource. The range of activities is impressive, and the nature of many of the tasks defiantly 'filmic' (too much so for one teacher reviewer), but the major problem with the publication is one of over-supply. There is a lot of material for the teacher to sift through before making their selection and, while most of it is well pitched for its target audience, several of the more 'filmic' assignments are among the more complex – and therefore likely to scare off the English teacher who would otherwise be attracted to the 'film of the book' approach.

Hamlin and Watkinson (1998) is a photocopiable resource clearly targeted at one particular syllabus, which contains one unit (out of eight) that is devoted to film. It has shrewdly taken Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* as its main focus, a film with which most English teachers will be familiar, and its approach is a variation of the 'film of the book' approach – namely, asking students to consider how to adapt another Shakespeare play for the screen. Superficially the material seems on solid ground, but the activities are not as carefully structured as they at first appear: more attention is paid to the 'English' side of the assignment than to the film side, and, as far as the film side is concerned, an understanding of many complicated concepts (or at least concepts that in other resources receive page after page of explanation) is assumed. Some of the questions designed to help students are immensely complex without prior illustration, and the central premise – that all future films of Shakespeare must follow the Luhrmann model (whatever that is) – is highly questionable. Russell and Poppy (1996) is targeted at the teacher of English but is arguably of greater benefit to the teacher of media studies. (Indeed, the introductory note clarifies that the material is aimed principally at the teacher who is already 'teaching media and media components'.) Accompanied by an extremely useful video, it offers assignments of varying accessibility but which are generally well tailored to the target audience. It is teacher friendly in many respects (the breakdown of assessment objectives, for example, enable teachers to fit activities easily into their schemes of work) but the language level and issues of

presentation (the publisher has a fondness for an over-extended line length) detract from an otherwise useful approach.

### **Media studies resources**

Two of these resources (Wall & Walker, 1997; Connell et al, 1996) come with something better even than the imprimatur of the chief examiner of a specific syllabus: they are actually co-written by the chief examiner. Teachers will doubtless be drawn to them in droves as a result, but they should think twice before doing so. Wall and Walker (1997) presents an enormous amount of text for the student to digest and does so with a linguistic and conceptual complexity that makes the process even less appealing. There is a clear impression that the teacher is being addressed through the student (an approach that is only rarely successful), and the illustrative material – which should be used either to relieve the density of the text or, ideally, to illuminate it – is poorly presented and lacking in teaching focus. There are seventeen pages in the book devoted to film (or, rather, the film industry) out of a total of 256, and the activities within these pages remain, like many of the others, dry and desk-bound. Connell et al (1997) fares slightly better in that it attempts to do slightly less but, once again, film is singled out for the weakest treatment of all media forms: there is a section on Science Fiction (as a genre common to film and television) and one on the structure and language of film (which is quite successful) – but these are notable for what they omit as much as for what they include. However, the book does have the advantage of both being practical wherever possible and also making considerable use of student material.

The other course book examined here (Dutton and Mundy, 1998) is less ambitious and, arguably for that reason, somewhat more successful – although once again film is treated less well than the other media forms. The A4 format feels more appropriate to the subject, and the teaching narrative is held back to allow the student to draw their own conclusions from the wealth of realia, illustrations and photographs (by no means all successful, however). There are fewer activities, but these are more carefully structured and considered. Having said that, the virtues of the publication do not extend to its treatment of film, which is consigned to individual consideration only in terms of genre, on only two and a half pages out of 160 and at a level that is unlikely to enthuse the GCSE student. Kruger and Wall (1995) can hardly be accused of this: one-third of the pack is devoted to film, and its account of the subject is probably better than any other publication at this level. Unlike some of the other resources considered in this category, it shows no fear of the subject and quietly proceeds to present an approach to the understanding of film which is well pitched for the target audience and infused with the writers' own enthusiasm. It is hard to see this material not working, although it will be an irritant to many teachers that, to use it effectively, they will have to photocopy every page of the pack. This is essentially a course book pretending to be a resource pack, and it would have benefited everyone if it had been presented as such.

### **Practical resources**

McWha (19??) is one of two resources among all those collected for review that attempt to make moving-image work accessible to disabled students, in this case students with learning difficulties. Ideally to be carried out in the course of a visit to MOMI, the activities it presents are nevertheless well chosen for the target audience and could easily be translated to another learning environment. There is a simplicity to some of the tasks that the more sophisticated resources could learn from, and an attempt to limit the field of enquiry that also works well. What works less well is the actual design of the materials: there are basic issues of typography and page design that have not been considered (e.g. upper-case letters pose more of a problem to students with learning difficulties than lower-case letters; the point at which the lines are broken is significant; thought needs to be given to the distribution of text on a particular page, etc.) and which gives a final impression of a well-conceived idea inadequately realised. Grahame (1997) is in many respects a similar resource to C4/BFI (1997) (although it might be argued that it is not, strictly speaking, a moving-image resource at all, being a collection of still images that may be combined into the impression of a moving strip). The resource combines printed material with an interactive CD-ROM, but students can work adequately from the printed page itself. There are eight self-contained exercises, each of them well pitched for student interest and learning needs. The material is more an exercise in photo-journalism and picture stories than it is in moving-image techniques, but for a basic introduction to sequencing and editing techniques it is hard to fault. Both text and activities directed at the student are well judged, even if the teacher text is not always as successful (witness the phrase 'While a de-contextualised or overly-formulaic taxonomy of image analysis skills can be both de-motivating and deadening').

### General comments

Despite the number of resources produced at this level, there is a surprising conservatism in most of the approaches they adopt. This applies, most obviously, to the course book. While it is, of course, good to see the subject of media studies so firmly established as to warrant the publication of course-book material for it, on the basis of the publications gathered here, the format appears to be an inadequate medium either for teaching students or for converting more teachers to the cause.

To a certain extent, this conservatism is a function of the syllabus requirements: where there is a prescribed body of knowledge to impart it is incumbent on teacher and publisher to work to that, not to investigate more imaginative ways of treating a subject. This is one reason why some of the more adventurous approaches adopted in the first three key stages are notable here by their absence and why, even those that are not tied to any one syllabus, seem more cautious than their junior counterparts.

There are also surprising omissions, which are themselves no doubt a result of the over-crowded curriculum. Most conspicuously, there appear to be few materials that are essentially practical resources that enable students to experiment with the techniques about which they are learning. It is as if, with the sudden accreditation of examination, there is a new seriousness to the subject which requires a more academic, intellectual and sedentary approach. What appeared at the outset an oasis in fact turns out to be merely a different route back into the desert.

### *Resources reviewed*

- Broadbent, S. (1997) *Gulliver's Travels*. London: English and Media Centre.
- Connell, B., Brigley, J. and Edwards, M. (1996) *Examining the Media*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Cooper, N. (1998) *Cinema and History: Regeneration*. London: Film Education.
- Dutton, B. and Mundy, J. (1998) *Media Studies: an introduction*. Harlow: Longman.
- Grahame, J. (1996) *Picture Power*. London: English and Media Centre.
- Hamlin, M. and Watkinson, R. (1998) *Media Assignments for GCSE English*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Kruger, S. and Wall, I. (1997) *Media Pack*. Walton-on-Thames: Nelson.
- Lacey, N. and Stafford, R. (1998) *Melodrama Genre Project*. Bradford: NMPFT.
- McWha, C. (1998) *In the Picture: a media work pack*. London: MOMI.
- Russell, A. and Poppy, J. (1996) *Media for English*. London: Film Education.
- Wall, P. and Walker, P. (1997) *Media Studies for GCSE*. London: Collins.

## 5 Post-16: a changing landscape

Beyond GCSE, the doors open for media studies. A level syllabuses, GNVQ courses, university degree courses, BTEC: there are syllabuses in abundance for the budding writer and publisher to target. Not surprisingly, more resources were collected at this level than at any other educational phase and, had this report not attempted to balance the age ranges, there would have been a huge and disproportionate skewing towards this level.

The post-16 level is also significant because the campaign for media studies originated in higher education, where enthusiasts strove to establish its academic credentials and to convince others of the intellectual rigour of its approach. To a very large extent, media studies is a higher-education construct, which teachers have only comparatively recently endeavoured to apply to a formal-education context.

There are vestiges of this academic background in the way that many of the resources listed target both A level and undergraduate students and also in the way that they are written and constructed – as if it were more important to the writers to establish beyond doubt their intellectual and academic pedigree and the legitimacy of their cause than it was to instruct and stimulate their students. This is one of the main reasons why a number of these resources suffer from conceptual and linguistic over-sophistication. As the latest edition of one course book at this level puts it:

It seemed clear that many sources were too obscure or badly written to be of much use to students or teachers. On the other hand, most of the early books intended for an 'A' level and undergraduate audience did not appear to reach the standard required by exam boards and other professional bodies.

(Price, 1998)

The existence of examination syllabuses means that there is a higher representation of commercial publishers at this level than at any other. By this token, the resources themselves should demonstrate those features commercial publishers pride themselves on being more able to achieve than their independent competitors: high-quality design, greater attention to the editorial process, superior paper and printing. In the event, this is not conspicuously the case: colour is used in a handful of these resources, but to no very great effect (Nicholas & Price, 1998, has full colour on selected pages only, and the use made of colour in O'Sullivan et al, 1998, will hardly persuade others that they should immediately follow suit); and a number of the more 'professionally' designed resources (for example, Morrissey and Warr, 1997) show no clearer understanding of how pages may be laid out to guide a student through the learning process than other, more modest, publications.

Student numbers on these examination courses, however, although growing exponentially, are still small enough for publishing companies to tread cautiously. This is particularly true of film studies. Either as a result of the paucity of published resources or because that is how they prefer to teach in any case, teachers on such courses are likely to select their material where they can find it, drawing from newspapers, TV programmes, periodicals, magazines and general books as much as from textbooks per se. The eclecticism of this approach is difficult for anyone publishing materials to attempt to replicate.

### Review of materials

The materials available at this level may be divided into the same three categories of course book, resource book and source book that are discussed in greater detail in Section 1 of this report. Only one book is devoted specifically to film studies; two of the course books considered for this review focus very specifically on the GNVQ course, so that any overlap with other syllabuses is unplanned; others focus on a specific syllabus but parade their relevance to a broader examination mix; one other defiantly attaches itself to no specific syllabus.

Nelmes (1996), the only course book targeted exclusively at film studies, does not confine itself to one particular syllabus. As such, it is likely to be used as much as a source book by teachers as it is as a course book by students. Like other titles produced by Routledge, it has been designed with intelligence and style and given a sophisticated production. A hard act for other books to follow, it comes close to being both comprehensive and authoritative without the dryness normally associated

with those epithets. The only uncertainties about it concern how easy it may be for an A level student to use and, by a similar token, how appropriate it is to this age range.

In terms of their film-specific content, most of the other course books disappoint: O'Sullivan et al (1998) embed most of their references to film within their overall exposition, and there are fewer activities relating to film than there are to other media forms, and fewer practical activities generally; however, the book makes intelligent use of charts and statistical information, which the student can weave into their own programme of study. The chapter on film in Nicholas and Price (1998), which chooses narrative structure as its focus, is one of the weakest chapters in the book: neither the exposition of the various narrative theories, nor the (unimpressive) case study on one particular film, encourages the student to do anything with what they might have learned, and the tone of the book throughout is remorselessly dry and solemn. The film-specific pages in Price (1998) reflect the weaknesses of the book as a whole – despite the author's exemplary critique of previous media studies publications in his introduction to this, the second, edition of the book. Unsure of its audience, with a language level inappropriate to A level students, too strong on theory and too weak on practice, students will have difficulty finding a way into this book. Branston and Stafford (1996) is more successful, since a shared enthusiasm for film is at the heart of the book and commentary on, and activities around, film are incorporated usefully into more general chapters. This is a wonderful refutation of criticisms made elsewhere in this report about course books. Written with obvious enthusiasm and with a mission to instil that same enthusiasm in its readers, given a page design that is (mostly) clean and accessible to its target audience, the book covers the key topics taught in media studies at this level and does so, courageously, without attempting to tailor its contents to any one examination syllabus. Its only weakness is a lack of practical activities.

This is a criticism that could not be made of the two GNVQ titles (Jenkins, 1997; Morrissey and Warr, 1997), which concentrate on video production, devoting an equal amount of their time to examining video in the accepted GNVQ pattern of researching, pre-production, production, post-production and evaluation. These are big books (560 and 640 pages respectively), and the length of the books might explain the poor quality of much of their production – but these are essentially practical resources, placed at the service of one particular examination. As such, the activities in Jenkins (1997) tend to be more carefully structured and more appropriately pitched at the level of the student, and that book's design, while somewhat amateurish, is nevertheless more successful than the busier design of Morrissey and Warr.

The three examples of resource packs selected at this level work to varying degrees of success. Least successful, perhaps, is Falcon (1994) merely because insufficient attention appears to have been paid to the way in which the material is to be mediated by the teacher: pages are not especially well organised (the narrative 'leaps' pages without warning); the contents of the video do not match those of the book in key areas; the distinction between teacher-directed material and student-directed material is not obvious. The effect is to reduce the effectiveness of otherwise impressive source material. Wall and White (1997) works more successfully, partly because its material is divided into separate booklets that can be used to work towards discreet assignments – although even here there are uncertainties of address (student and teacher are spoken to on the same page) and unevenness of organisation. Nevertheless, there is a vast amount of material available here; the extent to which teachers are able to make use of it will depend on the nature of the examination courses on which they are working. Ashbury et al (1998) is particularly useful and, in terms of its design, particularly successful as a resource pack. It, too, provides far more information than most teachers or students would want but it makes it easy for them to select what is of interest. In the process it brings a neglected area of the film studies syllabus within easy access. It is also an example of how the passion and enthusiasm of the author(s) for their subject matter can result in a written style that is inspiring as well as instructive.

In terms of source material, the MOMI leaflets of Buscombe (199?) and Kabir and Sawhney (1991) are useful additions. Neither provides suggestions for activities, but each presents information in ways that would enable teachers and students easily to devise their own agendas. Of the two, Buscombe is possibly more successful, partly because it attempts to cover less territory and partly because it is produced to a slightly higher quality. Street (1997), like Nelmes (1996), is likely to be of more use to undergraduates than to students at 16–18, but it is accessibly organised and presented and could be used, selectively, to great effect. Its language is well pitched at the target audience, and the design and structure of the book facilitate individual exploration.

### General comments

Although many of the resources produced for this phase are more successful than those published for other educational phases, some of the issues already discussed apply equally at this level. Partly because of the overlap with undergraduate courses, and partly because of the HE origins of the subject itself, many of these resources are pitched at too high a level, conceptually and linguistically, for most 16–18 year olds. There is only one specific film studies course book – largely because the numbers of candidates on the one A level film studies syllabus, though growing dramatically, are still too small to tempt a publisher to target this group exclusively – and the other course books at this level deal unevenly with film.

Teachers at this level are, one suspects, more likely to adopt an eclectic approach to their selection of material, drawing as much from general-interest periodicals and magazines as from bespoke textbooks. They are likely to do this out of a mixture of personal inclination and necessity – there are still, even at this level, far too few truly appropriate resources.

### Resources reviewed

- Ashbury, R., Helsby, W. and O'Brien, M. (1998) *Teaching African Cinema*. London: BFI.
- Branston, G. and Stafford, R. (1996) *The Media Student's Book*. London: Routledge.
- Buscombe, E. (199?) *The Western*. London: MOMI.
- Falcon, R. (1994) *Classified!* London: BFI.
- Jenkins, T. (1997) *Media Communication & Production – Advanced*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Kabir, N. M. and Sawhney, R. (1991) *Cinema India*. London: MOMI.
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- O'Sullivan, T., Dutton, B. and Rayner, P. (1998) *Studying the Media*. London: Arnold.
- Price, S. (1998) *Media Studies*. Harlow: Longman.
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## Conclusions

### Introduction

The conclusions that follow refer back to the original frames of reference outlined in the brief for this report. These were to provide an independent assessment of resources in terms of their:

- presentation, design, style, language;
- accessibility to intended audience;
- clarity of intended learning outcomes;
- range of pedagogies supported/proposed.

However, before presenting a set of conclusions for each of these frames of reference, there are a number of general conclusions that may be drawn, the most obvious of which are:

- There is a dearth of film-education material below Key Stage 4.
- In the media studies books that appear at, and after, Key Stage 4, film is consistently the media form that is handled least successfully.
- The course book approach, however popular it may be with commercial publishers, is the approach least appropriate for film education.
- Insufficient use has been made so far of more interactive resources (e.g. CD-ROM), which are, arguably, particularly appropriate to this area of the curriculum.

Underlying each of these conclusions is, of course, one overall conclusion, which is that there is both a tremendous need for appropriate materials for film education and a tremendous opportunity for publishing organisations to publish resources in a relatively un-crowded field which, if successfully realised, could yield impressive financial and publishing returns.

To begin to identify what such resources might look like, each of the four frames of reference presented above will be considered in turn.

### Presentation, design, style, language

- The language level – and frequently the conceptual level – of many of the resources gathered for review is way above that of their target audience.
- People writing and producing materials for film education should think first and foremost of the two key users of their materials (teachers and students) before thinking of the concepts they seek to convey – at the moment, the impression is that the content is determining the style of address.
- Media studies and film studies seem to translate, in design terms, to busy page layouts and an attempt to include as much information as possible, often in an attempt to ape the magazine format; more attention to clean typography, full use of carefully chosen and well-reproduced images and an attempt to provide some visual differentiation of the material on the page would all make for more successful resources.
- This is an area of the curriculum that requires high production values: shorter resources with fewer photographs and illustrations would be preferable to longer resources full of imperfectly reproduced images.
- Especially in multi-component resources, particular care needs to be paid to the way in which individual components are intended to dovetail with each other, and clear instructions given as to their use. Packaging of these resources is also a crucial factor: if a resource works only as the successful combination of its component pieces, then these component pieces must be maintained in one place, and a packaging solution provided to this end.

### Accessibility to intended audience

- Linguistically most of the resources reviewed here are pitched above the language level of the students at which they are aimed.
- Pedagogically, few of the resources provide sufficient guidance for any but the more committed teacher.

- The most successful resources are generally those that set their sights lowest; doing a little well works better than doing a lot less successfully.
- The best materials here are those that reveal their authors' enthusiasm for the subject; film is something that people feel strongly about – a little more passion would not go amiss.
- The teacher is the crucial factor in the planning of any resource, even when the student is apparently the person being directly addressed. Student-directed materials should be produced with a clear idea of how the text is to be mediated to the student by the teacher – and with the confidence that this will be manageable; teacher-directed materials should show a clear division between teacher and student text and clear instructions to the teacher on how to work with the latter.
- The best resources are those that do not overestimate the teacher's familiarity with the subject. It is better for publications to run the risk of patronising teachers than for them to assume confidence in the concepts and language of film studies.

### **Clarity of intended learning outcomes**

- A clearly stated focus on one particular area of the curriculum is of more use to teachers than a broad statement of general curriculum relevance.
- A balance needs to be struck between, on the one hand, supplying enough curricular referencing to enable the teacher to incorporate materials easily into their schemes of work and their curricular planning and, on the other hand, providing so detailed a reference that it becomes intrusive and off-putting.
- In an overcrowded curriculum, film-education materials have to spell out which learning outcomes they intend to support, and how they will do this.

### **Range of pedagogies supported/proposed**

- There is generally a greater availability of resources that attempt to teach *about* film than there is of resources that teach *through* film; however, it is often these latter that are most successful.
- There is scope at all key stages, but especially at Key Stage 4 and beyond, for more resources that use film to teach about other curriculum areas.
- In order to use the enthusiasm for film that many teachers and students share, materials should try to strike a balance between the analytical/reflective activity and the more practical task – bearing in mind, of course, the limited resources available in many schools, or teachers' lack of familiarity with them.

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