

Flash Gordon (dir. Mike Hodges, 1980)

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English,
Key Stage 3

This lesson works as part of a mini-project that focus on the films *Attack the Block* and *Flash Gordon*. Other relevant films, such as *The Hunger Games* (2012) can also be used if helpful and if students are familiar with it.

The 'trailer' (starter) should be completed prior to viewing the films, to avoid preconceived ideas about the protagonists in the images. After completing the trailer activity and viewing the films, students can move on to the Main feature activity. Alternatively, the class may be split into groups to simultaneously complete the various 'Investigation' activities included in each lesson.

There are 'Bonus Features' tasks that may be used as extension activities, or to expand the project into a mini unit/scheme of work. Certain options are more suited to more/less able, and can be allocated accordingly.

You will need...

Trailer

Some images of heroes and heroines from a selection of films

Hero Handout, provided.

Main Attraction

Access to the internet.

End Credit

Paper, pencils, colouring pens.

Lesson Objective

- Students are given the opportunity to explore and better understand the function of heroes and heroines in fiction and to create their own characters using imaginative thinking and the knowledge they have acquired.

Curriculum Links

- Reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction
- Writing imaginatively
- Studying setting, plot, and characterisation, and the effects of these

Activities

TRAILER: What makes a Hero?

This task could be done before or while watching the films. Get students to think of the heroes and heroines of films they might have seen, such as *The Hunger Games* and ask them to come up with words to describe these figures and the assumptions we might make about his or her life.

Get students to come up with all the qualities you can think of that a person would need to qualify as a hero and write them on the *Hero Handout* (below). Discuss students' answers and encourage them to share their results.

MAIN ATTRACTION: Comic Book Heroes

The film you'll see was made in 1980, but the Flash Gordon character was created way back in 1934 in comic-book form. Research comic book heroes in your group (you should look at a few different ones including Flash). You could think about these questions:

- What qualities do comic book heroes have in common?
- Are there any you can find who you do NOT think should be considered heroes? Why?
- Is Flash fairly considered heroic? Are there any greater heroes within his story?
- How are heroes viewed with their societies/communities, or on their planets?

Comic book heroes are often created in response to what was happening in the real world at the time (Captain America is an interesting example). Investigate the context of your character's creation, and track how they have changed up to the present.

- Can you link this with historical events?
- How is comic book imagery used in the Flash Gordon film?

END CREDITS: Design you own hero

Only THEY can save the world! Think about:

- The threat being presented – what is placing people in danger?
- How your hero is uniquely suited to overcome that threat
- Are there other ways in which they are heroic? What personal challenges do they face?

- If you were a director, what costume, colour, sound effects, set, lighting, imagery, mise-en-scene etc. would you choose to present them to the audience?
- Choose them some theme music.

Extras

Other Ideas

Discussion: How are women/men/masculinity/femininity presented in our films? Can any of them be criticised for their representation? Is anyone under-represented?

Katniss Everdeen could be seen as a modern version of Robin Hood.

Investigate all the similarities and differences between them and their stories.

Tip: Compare the government of Katniss's world with what was happening in England when the Robin Hood myth is set.

Do you think that this is a fair comparison? What would have to happen in your world for there to be Robin Hood heroes? Can you think of any in the modern world?

Compare *The Hunger Games* with the legend of *Theseus and the Minotaur*.

Watch

"Well, someone's got to save our skins!" – *Star Wars – A New Hope*, 1977

"Aren't you the 'good' man?" – *Blade Runner* (Cert. 15), 1981

"Sounds wicked. Can I go first?" – *Tank Girl* (Cert. 15), 1995

"Perish with them, on this primitive and tasteless planet!" – *Masters of the Universe*, 1987

"We can discuss sexism in survival situations when I get back." – *Jurassic Park*, 1993

"We pretended. We.... We lied." *Galaxy Quest*, 1997

HERO HANDOUT

WHAT MAKES
A HERO?