



Hitchcock: Master of Suspense

Pre-Visit Activity

Goal:

Many students have heard of Alfred Hitchcock, but know little about his movies or his life. This fun activity will give students a working background of Hitchcock, the individual, which will better serve their critical viewing skills of his movies, their style and themes.

Materials:

- Writing Implement
- Activity Worksheets
- Access to Research Materials (mainly the Internet)

Procedure:

Distribute a worksheet to each student. If they have ever played the game Two Truths and a Lie they may be familiar with this format. As per the directions on the worksheet, there are three triplets, each containing two truths about the life and work of Alfred Hitchcock and one lie. Students should not guess which one the lie is, but rather research Hitchcock online to find out the answers. After determining the “lies,” students should use their new discoveries regarding Hitchcock’s personal life and body of work to create one or two of their own triplets (again, each with two truths and one lie). This part of the activity can be done at home as a homework assignment, if preferred by the teacher.

Once their worksheets are completed, students should gather back as a whole group and take turns presenting the triplets they created individually to the class. Their peers should then take turns guessing which the lie within the triplet is.

Evaluation:

After this assignment and activity, students should have a much better understanding of both Alfred Hitchcock’s personal life, including his youth and his career, his body of work, and the style/themes of his films. As such a unique and pioneering director, this will help students better understanding Hitchcock’s background in the film industry, as well as his motivations for and development of his landmark directing style.

Going Forward:

As an additional activity, students could view one of Hitchcock’s movies on their own at home.



Hitchcock: Master of Suspense

Name _____

Date _____

Getting to Know the Master of Suspense

In each of the examples below, there are three facts listed about Alfred Hitchcock's life, work, and style. In each triplet, two of the facts are true, one is false. Using whatever resources are at your disposal, determine which one is the lie.

1. Hitchcock was a very social child, who liked spending time getting to know everyone around him. His numerous interactions with people helped him better understand the inner workings of the human mind, a prevalent theme in his films.
2. Growing up, Hitchcock's father would send him with a note to the local police office when he acted up. He would be locked in a cell for 10 minutes before being sent home. Hitchcock credits this for his distrust of the police as an adult.
3. Hitchcock's mother would often make him stand at the foot of her bed, telling her about his day for hours at a time. Hitchcock claims this influenced his portrayal of mothers throughout his films, particularly *Psycho*.

The lie is: _____

1. Hitchcock never won a Best Directing Oscar, and only one of his films, *Rebecca*, won for Best Picture.
2. Although already known for his movies, Hitchcock only became a household name when his television show, "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" came out in 1955.
3. Though originally from Britain, Hitchcock only began working as a film director after moving to America.

The lie is: _____

1. Many of Hitchcock's movies have a "macguffin," or an object that moves the plot along and seems important to the characters, but in the end plays no important role in the movie.
2. One of Hitchcock's trademarks was making a cameo appearance in all of his movies. Often he appears at the beginning of the movie, because he knew viewers were looking for him and he didn't want to distract them from the story.
3. Hitchcock believed that the best way to frighten his audiences was to show graphic violence or explicitly disturbing scenes in his movies.

The lie is: _____

On the back of this paper, research and create your own triplet of two truths and one lie regarding Hitchcock's personal life and body of work to share with your class. Remember, the more creative you are, the more you'll stump your classmates!



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Getting to Know the Master of Suspense (ANSWER KEY)

In each of the examples below, there are three facts listed about Alfred Hitchcock's life, work, and style. In each triplet, two of the facts are true, one is false. Using whatever resources are at your disposal, determine which one is the lie.

1. Hitchcock was a very social child, who liked spending time getting to know everyone around him. His numerous interactions with people helped him better understand the inner workings of the human mind, a prevalent theme in his films.
2. Growing up, Hitchcock's father would send him with a note to the local police office when he acted up. He would be locked in a cell for 10 minutes before being sent home. Hitchcock credits this for his distrust of the police as an adult.
3. Hitchcock's mother would often make him stand at the foot of her bed, telling her about his day for hours at a time. Hitchcock claims this influenced his portrayal of mothers throughout his films, particularly *Psycho*.

The lie is: ____Number 1____

1. Hitchcock never won a Best Directing Oscar, and only one of his films, *Rebecca*, won for Best Picture.
2. Although already known for his movies, Hitchcock only became a household name when his television show, "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" came out in 1955.
3. Though originally from Britain, Hitchcock only began working as a film director after moving to America.

The lie is: ____Number 3____

1. Many of Hitchcock's movies have a "macguffin," or an object that moves the plot along and seems important to the characters, but in the end plays no important role in the movie.
2. One of Hitchcock's trademarks was making a cameo appearance in all of his movies. Often he appears at the beginning of the movie, because he knew viewers were looking for him and he didn't want to distract them from the story.
3. Hitchcock believed that the best way to frighten his audiences was to show graphic violence or explicitly disturbing scenes in his movies.

The lie is: ____Number 3____

On the back of this paper, research and create your own triplet of two truths and one lie regarding Hitchcock's personal life and body of work to share with your class. Remember, the more creative you are, the more you'll stump your classmates!



Hitchcock: Master of Suspense

Post-Visit Activity

Goal:

Following their class at The Paley Center, students will have a better understanding of how Hitchcock uses suspense as a film technique to engage with his audience. This activity will give students the chance to delve further into Hitchcock's work, analyzing how various cinematic elements contribute to the overall message and finished film.

Materials:

Writing utensils | Worksheet | YouTube access to the film clip

Procedure:

Students will be analyzing film based on the visual, auditory, and editing elements. Divide students into four groups and assign each group a particular aspect of the film making process on which they should focus. The four aspects to assign to groups are the following: Cinematography, Design, Sound, and Editing. There is a more detailed explanation of each responsibility on the activity worksheet, which should be handed out to students when they are divided into groups. Groups should take a moment to review their specific aspect and responsibilities before viewing the clip, and keep their particular element in mind when watching.

Once ready, the class should screen one of the two following iconic Hitchcock clips:
Crop Duster from "North by Northwest"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6gm5n5WmxY>

Shower Scene from "Psycho" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VP5jEAP3K4>

After viewing, students should separate into groups to discuss how their particular element played out in the scene. Students can use the worksheet to guide their analysis and discussion. Bring the class back together and have each group share their findings. As a class, consider the following:

- How did all of these parts come together in the scene?
- Did one element seem to take precedence over the others?
- Which element do you think was used most effectively?

Evaluation:

After this activity and discussion, students will have a better understanding of how various film elements are constructed and brought together to form a cohesive product. They will further develop their critical viewing skills, with their analysis becoming more natural. Furthermore, they should have a concrete understanding of Hitchcock's style, and how elements can be manipulated to create suspense.

Going Further:

Continue the discussion by apply this same activity to different directors' works. Completing this assignment several times will solidify an understanding of the various elements of film production, as well as helping students become more comfortable with film analysis.



Hitchcock: Master of Suspense

Name _____ Date _____

Critiquing the Master of Suspense

Each of your groups will be given a specific aspect of film production to focus on when watching a Hitchcock clip.

THE VISUAL TRACK – WHAT WE SEE

CINEMATOGRAPHY: What do you see? How is the camera used to tell this story and create mood and meaning? Where is the camera positioned in relation to the subject? At what angle is it positioned?

DESIGN: What is the overall look of the film’s scene? What types of props and costumes are used? What do you see in the frame? What does the set tell us about the tone, style and scene’s general aesthetic? How is lighting used?

THE AUDIO TRACK – WHAT WE HEAR

SOUND: What do you hear? Is music used? Sound effects? Is there background noise? Keep in mind that silence is also important!

THE FINAL CUT – HOW IT’S ALL PUT TOGETHER

EDITING: How have all the scenes and pieces of the film been put together? What are the transitions and cuts between shots, the pace of the shots, and the various types of shots used?

Watch this Hitchcock clip carefully as you keep these questions in mind. You can use the back of this sheet to take notes as you watch.

After discussing your role’s involvement to the film clip, present your ideas and findings to the class. As each group presents, write down their main points in the chart below. Use the chart to see how the different roles interact and influence each other in the film production.

THE VISUAL TRACK		THE AUDIO TRACK	THE FINAL CUT
<i>Cinematography</i>	<i>Design</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Editing</i>