

Abstract

Practical Pedagogy for the Use of  
Filmic Adaptations of Canonical Texts

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The following study is dedicated to the practical usage of filmic adaptations in the academic setting; more specifically, I explore the usage of adaptations based on *The Scarlet Letter* and how they can be integrated into language arts classrooms in American high schools. In doing so I explore not only the stigmas commonly attached to adaptation studies but also the current scholarship by critics such as Robert Stam, Brian MacFarlan and Thomas Leitch who strive to eliminate these stigmas. I also examine the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, as this document is the curriculum guide followed for all North Carolina public schools, and use its language as a guide for the creation of my instructional guide. In my examination, I discuss where the SCOS's language provides

opportunity for the integrating adaptation into the typical English III classroom. The study of adaptation is a contested subject and has not taken a strong hold in high school classrooms, but yields interesting revelations about not only the original texts, but also the cultural setting of the newer works.

A large portion of this work will also include a proposed unit plan for a sample novel and film pairing. This is included for other academics to study as a model for other pairings and will have a variety of lesson plans and assignments. I created this unit to help students master film terminology as well as the novel's content, so that teachers themselves can practice new material while also using older, more comfortable methods of instruction. The inclusion of this unit means that a high school teacher unfamiliar with film language and study can successfully teach a unit on film adaptation.

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## Chapter 1: An Introduction to Adaptations in the High School Classroom

Many teachers and scholars have felt the educational taboo of using a film in a high school language arts classroom: John Golden, a teacher and writer who explores incorporating film into the high school classroom, says in his teaching guide *Reading in the Dark* that “I know what the other teachers – and my principal – are thinking: ‘Is Golden showing another movie? Doesn’t he teach at all?’” (xiii). For a variety of reasons, films in high school classrooms have not been considered as worthy of study as traditional printed texts are: often teachers do not have the expertise to teach the material or simply use a film to reinforce narrative information from a text currently being read in class (Gerster 9, Golden xiii). Unfortunately, this means that teachers do not usually tap into the resources that films offer. Films have the same literary features that are found in print text, e.g. symbolism and characterization, but also include new skills to be learned, such as achieving visual literacy.

Some people wonder why study film at all: after all, films are largely made for entertainment purposes and the assumption therefore is that they are not meant to be studied. However, a participant or observer’s enjoyment of other entertainments, like sports, music or cooking, is enhanced by knowledge of it. As Timothy Corrigan explains in his 2007 article “Literature on Screen, a History: in the Gap”, “our delight in these entertainments is made richer by honing our analytical thinking, furthering our depth of knowledge, and broadening our technical and formal vocabularies” (8). Film study helps viewers understand a several features of its medium, use and context within our culture: for example, film helps viewers understand how filmmakers use the medium, and test its possibilities. It also expands viewers’ appreciation for films, pushing them to notice more significant visual information. Film study also helps viewers contextualize how films affect each other and other media. Finally, studying film helps viewers



relate to different people, places or cultures they might never experience otherwise, although viewers do need to remember that the filmmaker's point of view affects everything (Phillips 3 – 4). Students face a visual culture in almost everything they experience: television, music videos, YouTube, video games, comic books, web pages and films. The characters that students see in films become their role models, icons, friends and enemies. The film world has infiltrated television, radio, advertising and pop culture, and although students are exposed to it all every day, many do not understand how to interpret it or are simply not able to explain how that world is constructed. In *Teaching Ethnic Diversity with Film*, Carole Gerster points out that “we live in an image-saturated culture” where “our source of knowledge is shifting from the written word to the visual image” (8). What this means for teachers is that students are now becoming more exposed to visual media that they directly interact with or participate in, and that education styles that only reference print sources will not speak to them in the language students are already exposed to and read on a daily basis, even if at a rudimentary level.

However, many students are not aware that they have the tools to study visual media. Without learning and practicing the formal terms and techniques to study visual media, students may become passive viewers of a bombardment of images and sounds. As passive viewers of film, students forget that film worlds are created as a book world is created, and can be dissected as such. Once students are taught film techniques like the Kuleshov effect (the inference of space by the use of editing) students become aware of just how easily manipulated the film world can be. Some high school teachers also do not have the tools to teach students how to study visual media: many do not know the terminology themselves (Gerster 9). Educating teachers on how to use and teach visual media in the classroom will in turn mean that students will know how to read visual media, meaning they will be more successful participants in our visual culture.

This sounds rather grand: teaching teachers, changing education styles and patterns, speaking to students in a language they do not know they already speak. Teachers may stop and ask, “How do I start teaching something I don’t know?” The answer is probably similar to something they themselves have relied on in their own teaching practices: by using old material as a scaffold for new material. Teachers will use their previous knowledge of a text to teach students about reading a film, so that they can concentrate on the new skills and find comfort in the old ones. By doing so, teachers can practice teaching film while using material and knowledge they have engaged previously.

Imagine this scenario: a language arts teacher is about to teach a novel he or she has taught several times before and wants to include some new material for her students, but is not sure what will help them and what will appeal to them. Using an adaptation to supplement the novel is a perfect solution: an adaptation allows the teacher to rely on previously used lessons, themes and characters that are familiar, but will still provide the chance to incorporate new learning opportunities for students. Adaptations explore different interpretations of films, and students see a story happen and explore visual representations of themes or symbols, and a whole host of other scenarios I discuss later. A teacher using this project would be able to apply some (though maybe not all) of the same lesson ideas and topics to other novel and film pairings. Adaptations illuminate a text, and this project helps language arts teachers do precisely that.

In this particular thesis, I have created an instructional guide for teaching Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* while simultaneously teaching students how to read and interpret films: specifically, three adaptations of *The Scarlet Letter*. This instructional guide includes all necessary materials for instruction, except the films and novel themselves. Each lesson is complete with a lesson plan and any necessary notes or student handouts. Additionally, there are

lesson summaries that provide an overview of the whole unit. I complete the unit with a comprehensive exam that assesses not only the novel's content but also the films' content. The resulting teaching guide should reinforce high teaching standards and provide a means for teachers to bring adaptations into the classroom to supplement and support other materials. While some teachers have created teaching guides, as Golden has done, this one is unique in its degree of detail and the level of sophistication in the lesson plans, and in what is expected of students.

Before presenting the instructional guide, I explore the history of adaptation studies and the various theories that have dominated the field over the last fifty years. I also examine *The Scarlet Letter* and how the novel and its adaptations can meet the standards set forth in the North Carolina public education curriculum. In this way I outline in detail why teachers should include adaptations as a means of instruction in a high school classroom. Chapter 2 highlights the main discourse on adaptation studies, focusing on its history as well as a few theories regarding its practice. I explore the current state of adaptation studies and some theories from contemporary critics and scholars. In particular, I discuss fidelity studies and how, when conducted in the traditional way set forth by George Bluestone, it is considered obsolete. However, with a particular direction, it can illuminate the novel's source text and the adaptation's source culture, and I model this in the following chapter. Chapter 3 provides background material on Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic text *The Scarlet Letter* and the various filmic adaptations. I focus specifically on why the text has become so widely read in high schools and what the various "infidelities" in the films I study reveal about American heritage and culture, as well as how the adaptations add to the work's collective entity. The three films, which vary greatly in budget, point of view and purpose, create a body of work that students examine to learn about film,

adaptation and our past and present culture. Chapter 4 looks closely at the practical arguments for the inclusion of film adaptation in a high school classroom. I study the language of North Carolina's educational curriculum guide and discuss how film in particular makes a valuable addition to standard curriculum. I conclude the chapter by referencing specific sections of the novels and films that will be used in the lessons, and discuss how they meet the objectives listed in North Carolina's Standard Course of Study. Chapter 5 provides the instructional guide mentioned earlier: the first section consists of lesson summaries that highlights important aspects of each lesson. The appendix includes lesson plans and additional materials. I also explain my own lesson plan format for instructors or readers unfamiliar with its particular source.<sup>1</sup> I created these lessons for a typical high school English III classroom that has access to technology for playing DVDs and will work for any class size. Lessons often call for students to use a writing journal that will house their thoughts, reflections and reactions to both their readings and screenings. Although using a bound journal would be ideal, teachers can have students simply collect their writings and store them together. All lesson plans include North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) objectives and classroom objectives, and all include either important vocabulary or guiding questions that will be referenced in the lesson.

The result of this project will be a comprehensive, useable guide for integrating an adaptation into a typical high school classroom that is more sophisticated than previous guides, along with the arguments and rationalization for doing so. Teachers should be able to simply review the film terminology for their own edification, acquire the necessary films and texts and begin teaching. Ideally, teachers will find that the adaptations enhance understanding for

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for Six Point Lesson Plan, Finley Plan and my lesson plan formats.

students, and will use other adaptations in a similar way in the future. Timothy Corrigan claims that “to seriously think about film and to study and to study it carefully is to take charge of one of the most influential forces in our lives” (9) and this study is a step in that direction.

## CHAPTER 2: Adaptation Studies

In this chapter I provide a brief history of adaptation studies that will highlight the work of important scholars like Robert Stam, Christine Geraghty and Simone Murray, all of whom are widely published scholars in the field. I do this because many students will ask the same questions that critics have asked, and providing the history for them will help students push into a deeper analysis of the work without redoing the work of earlier scholars. I outline how the earliest form of the discipline - fidelity studies - came to be and how it was used and then abandoned as the field became more sophisticated. I also focus on current texts and theories and explain why my theory for using adaptation as a teaching tool fits into the newer methodologies. The chapter's conclusion focuses on the possibilities adaptations hold for high school classes and how their inclusion in classroom instruction can improve current teaching trends. In particular, teachers will want to lead students in discussions about the reception of adaptations, and how the cultural atmosphere at the time of the film's production and release may effect its creation. It will be important for teachers to remind students that adaptations are a result of not only the work they reproduce, but also the culture in which they were produced. Teachers may find the information in this chapter to be a useful way of introducing adaptation in general, but will also need to include information specific to the novel and film pairing they are teaching, as I will do later in Chapter 4. This is all modeled in the sample unit in Chapter 5.

Simone Murray notes in her 2009 article "Materializing Adaptation Theory: The Adaptation Industry" that adaptation studies have been "regarded as the bastard offspring of literary studies and film theory" and has always struggled for a sound methodology (4). Murray means that generally neither literature studies nor film studies have taken adaptation under its wing, both claiming that it was either too filmic or too literary for their discipline. As a

consequence, adaptation studies have existed in a strange middle ground. Thomas Leitch claims English studies has traditionally treated adaptation studies “not so much with hostility as with benign neglect” (“How to Teach,” 4). This treatment seems unfair: certainly adaptations are as legitimate as any other film, and films are certainly recognized as being worthy of study at a collegiate level. Many college campuses now include coursework in film, and introductory textbooks such as David Bordwell’s *Film Art* are commonly used for study in the college classroom. However, adaptations fall into a strange disconnect as being both film and literature and later in this chapter I discuss Robert Stam’s theory on why adaptations are still not as widely accepted. According to the past sixty years of theory, the negative view of adaptations resulted from the earliest studies. These studies, particularly the fidelity studies of the 1950s, have been pronounced as “obsolete” (Murray 4), and Stam lists an entire range of reasons why critics and audiences still dislike adaptations. In short, critics and audiences find adaptations to be parasitic, base forms of entertainment instead of literature. Later in this chapter I review this list and other contemporary texts but before I delve into the current state of adaptations studies, I discuss how fidelity studies came to be in George Bluestone’s 1950s studies.

#### *History of Adaptation Studies*

The theories regarding adaptation have changed over its short history, moving from fidelity studies in the 1950s to cultural studies in the 1970s to, as Timothy Corrigan explains, a new focus on the possibilities for adaptations and its capabilities in the 1990s. He also says that the new focus has produced “new energies and significant scholarship . . . opening the questions informing the relations of literature and film in larger, less predictable, and more concrete ways” (“Literature On Screen” 41). Despite this, contemporary views still reflect the earlier methodologies by continually revisiting fidelity. George Bluestone was a leading adaptation

theorist during the middle of the twentieth century and is credited for publishing the founding text on adaptation studies, *Novels into Film (1954)* (Leitch, *Film Adaptations* 1). This process, called a “fidelity study,” is the most basic way of exploring an adaptation and teachers may still find some value in its methodology as they first introduce students to adaptation. In short, a fidelity study consists of a scholar examining a primary text and an adapted text (in this case, a novel and a film, respectively) and noting the differences in the plot, mood, interpretation and general representation between the two. Bluestone conducted these studies for a number of years, and because twelve years passed before another seminal text was published on the topic Bluestone’s text was widely used in colleges and universities (Corrigan 41). Although Bluestone was the first to conduct fidelity studies, his methodology was widely used for many years and was the gauge by which many adaptations were measured. He claimed that literature and films had a “fitful relationship” (172) and that although it seemed as if the two would complement one another, they were in fact “secretly hostile” (173) and in fact undermined what the other was trying to achieve by forcing them into competition. The method proved to be both time-consuming and repetitive, and, as Murray notes, using Bluestone’s methodology is frustrating: by only looking for similarities and differences between the book text and film text, scholars note that they are alike in some ways but not in others. In his discussion of William Wyler’s 1939 adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* he points out that “the film makers have made the events comprehensible to a twentieth century mass audience” (179) by eliminating much of the social and class tension from the plot. Bluestone himself admits that the changes enhance the film, although he does not explain why exactly, saying that ‘we are forced to conclude that it is precisely those additions which the filmmakers have written into their story’ (179). Despite that, Bluestone still claims that the film represents the “mutational process” (174) of adaptation, and



that the story was cut in half. It seems as though even as Bluestone praises the changes that Goldwyn made during the adaptation, he cannot escape the contemptuous language so often associated with the field. This paradoxical treatment of adaptations was typical of a fidelity study. Despite the contemporary distaste for fidelity studies, critics view Bluestone as a necessary, though perhaps tedious, step in the evolution of adaptation theory. In the next section I discuss how fidelity studies have affected the field in the past and continue to do so today.

### *Fidelity Studies in Contemporary Discourse*

The issue of fidelity has been discussed at length by almost every adaptation scholar.<sup>2</sup> Brian MacFarlane claims that “it shouldn’t be necessary after several decades of serious research. . . to insist that ‘fidelity’ to the original text. . . is a wholly inappropriate and unhelpful criterion” (15). Current scholarship still discusses the issue in some way though, even if only to point out the shortcomings of what Murray considers “obsolete methodology” (4). Most scholars at least revisit Bluestone’s methodology – it serves almost as a touchstone that needs to be acknowledged. The drawbacks to the method are obvious: as Simone Murray points out if a film strays from the original text even once, it is no longer faithful. There is no in-between, no middle ground – there is faithful, and unfaithful (6). Once a director has made this choice to be “unfaithful” in one particular case, is it worth staying true to the original text after that moment? However, the fact that fidelity still is the root of discussion at all intrigues other critics: Robert Stam devotes much of the introductory section of his text *Literature and Film: A Guide to*

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about fidelity studies, see Bluestone, George 171 – 176; Carrol, Noel 332; Cavell, Stanley 353; Chatman, Seymour 446; Leitch, Thomas *Film Adaptation* 1 – 3; Leitch, Thomas “Twice Told” 41 – 44; MacFarlane, Brian 15 – 16; Murray, Simone 4 – 6; Stam Robert 3 – 15.

*Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* to the topic of fidelity. The problem of fidelity currently seems to be with what Stam refers to as the “profoundly moralistic” language and perception of changes in adaptations: film reviewers often rely on terms like “infidelity,” “betrayal,” “deformation,” “violation,” “bastardization,” “vulgarization” and “desecration” (3). Film reviewers generally react quite negatively to a film that considers itself an adaptation but does not follow the original text as closely as possible, as I discuss with Joffe’s 1995 adaptation of *The Scarlet Letter*, which is, as Joffe prefaces his film, “freely adapted” from Hawthorne’s text. However, as Murray points out, complete fidelity is not possible or even practical.

The issue of fidelity is of great concern for some, particularly when adaptations are made from more well-known sources. The concern here arises from the cherished original work, and the fear that its reputation will be tarnished after the release of a poorly made adaptation. Many adaptations have been made from classic texts; Murray claims that this is done because the novel’s success often increases the film’s marketability (8). Christine Geraghty notes in her 2008 work *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* that adaptations of classic texts rely on the success of the previous work and its prestige. However, the adaptation is presented as a new version of the same story, now made for a modern audience: “[an adaptation] promises change and transformations not only of the original source but also of the screen adaptations that have preceded it” (15) and each work adds to a greater body. As multiple adaptations are made over time, they become a part of a larger, more complete collection of work that exists as an accumulation of all the forms of one story. For example, *The Scarlet Letter’s*

entire body consists not only of the novel, but also more than ten adaptations that have been made from it, as well as the cultural influence it may have.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Leitch addresses the issue of multiple adaptations of the same source in his 1991 article “Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal and the Rhetoric of the Remake.” He claims in particular that “the peculiar nature of the relationships [multiple adaptations] establish with their earlier models and with their audience makes them unique among Hollywood films” (Leitch 37). Leitch goes on to say that there is a relationship between all adaptations of one particular work and the original work itself: all these elements are connected and filmmakers create new adaptations with this relationship in mind. New versions of a story face the problem of recreating an old story without it becoming boring. The later adaptation must work to again reconnect with the original text in a way the earlier adaptation did not. The later adaptation attempts to be like earlier adaptations, but also simultaneously better. Before seriously analyzing an adaptation, it is important to investigate the relationship it has with its literary and filmic predecessors. These films are often trying to prove something in light of one another: that the new film is more like the original text than previous adaptations have been, or that it is more historically accurate than previous adaptations have been, or that it is more contemporarily relevant than previous adaptations have been. Furthermore, remakes of adaptations have one of two goals: to recreate a text or time period faithfully, or to make a work relevant to a contemporary audience (Leitch 46).

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<sup>3</sup> *The Scarlet Letter* adaptations are as follows: Sydney Olcott’s 1908 starring Gene Gauntier as Hester Prynne, produced by the Kalem Company; Joseph W. Smiley and George Loane Tucker’s 1911 starring Lucille Young as Hester Prynne, produced by the Independent Moving Pictures Company of America; David Mile’s 1913 starring Linda Arvidson as Hester Prynne, produced by the Kinemacolor Company; Carl Harbaugh’s 1917 starring Mary Martin as Hester Prynne, produced by the Fox Film Corporation; Challis Sanderson’s 1922 starring Sybil Thorndike as Hester Prynne, produced by Master; Victor Sjöström’s 1926 starring Lillian Gish as Hester Prynne, produced by MGM; Robert Vignola’s 1934 starring Colleen Moore; Wim Wenders’ 1973 starring Senta Berger as Hester Prynne; Rick Hauser’s 1979 starring Meg Foster and Roland Joffe’s 1995 starring Demi Moore.

The three versions of *The Scarlet Letter* should be considered differently based on Leitch's point: Vignola and Hauser's versions, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, attempt to recreate Hawthorne's text faithfully. Joffe's 1995 adaptation attempts to retell Hawthorne's story with modern influences, and also rejects the simplicity of fidelity. In this light, MacFarlane is right: a fidelity study in its own right does little to illuminate either text or the films. However, if teachers and scholars view an adaptation's changes as interpretations instead of infidelities, then teachers can use the changes as opportunities for close reading and careful viewing. By asking students questions like: "How does Hester's representation in this scene differ from her representation in the novel? Does that change your opinion of her? Does that change the novel?" students can dig away at how small differing interpretations affect the film, and the novel's holistic existence. However, by considering each film as its own work, with its own goals and ambitions, students understand more about the culture it was created in, and how that culture viewed the original work and its viewpoints.

#### *The 1970s and 1980s*

In the 1970s and 1980s, adaptation scholars began to move away from fidelity studies and instead view films in terms of other contemporary theoretical trends including post-colonialism, feminism, post-structuralism, and multicultural studies. The shift in thought was not particularly "hospitable" to adaptation studies (Corrigan 40) and in fact pushed more so to define film as its own discipline that stood independent of literary studies and film. Without the support of those two fields, adaptation studies floundered until two different principal schools of thought arose: one neo-formalistic front (that films should be analyzed based on their structural components and sociologically) and one ideological (that films should be analyzed as a product of a cultural) front. Each strove to define film in its own right: while the first sought to

distinguish between film from printed literature, the second looked more closely at how film fit into other ideological and psychological theories of the time (40). Their studies might include questions such as: how is Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, a very popular adaptation based on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* that moved the original story from colonial Africa to war-stricken Vietnam, affected by post-colonialism? How is it affected by feminism? These questions were engineered to determine where adaptation sat in reference to the rest of the English studies discipline, and within its own field. Film serves as means of observing society; our fears, hopes and beliefs come through in our visual narratives, and adaptations go one step further by referencing older texts. Questioning where adaptations stood in relation to other scholarly trends revealed how filmmakers thought about those topics. While these questions are an excellent beginning, these scholars tried to impose a particular set of ideas adaptation instead of letting the adaptations be the lens through which the scholar should examine society. More contemporary studies have begun looking at the act of adapting a text, finding the best means of evaluating the results, and what adaptations mean about our culture and how we view previously received literature. Scholars want to show how adaptations are works of art and literature even without the context of the original work, and how they can be used to reveal cultures trends, biases and beliefs.

#### *Adaptation Studies Today*

Most recently, adaptation theorists like Robert Stam are focusing on the actual procedures for studies, and how the past procedures have not proved fruitful, or at least not brought any new and valuable revelations. Indeed, many scholars – including Simone Murray and even Stam himself - concentrate on not necessarily on how a film was adapted, but instead focus on the problems with adaptation studies and “redefining adaptation as a part of an

intertextual process that is responsible for the production of all texts” (Leitch, “How to Teach” 9). Unfortunately, there is still a negative stigma ever since the fidelity supporters condemned adaptations in the 1950s. Since then, adaptations have been plagued with a whole list of problems that Stam discusses in *Literature Through Film*. In short, the misconceptions Stam lists focus on the “parasitic” (7) quality of adaptations that draw from the success of the original text, and assume that because adaptations are newer art form, and are “of the body” (6), they must essentially be for a lower class of viewer that would not appreciate the original format of a work. The general assumption is that adaptations are not as intelligent as novels, and the people who enjoy them similarly lack intelligence as well.<sup>4</sup>

However, there has been a wave of new scholarship on film and adaptations. Tim Corrigan claims that since the 1990s adaptation studies have a new focus on the possibilities for adaptations, and its capabilities. He also says that the new focus has produced “new energies and significant scholarship . . . opening the questions informing the relations of literature and film in larger, less predictable, and more concrete ways” (41). The results are questions about cultural and historical studies, “gender, textual authority and priority” (41) and national interpretations of adaptation. As a consequence, studies now are being done to explore a particular cultural theory’s presence or representation in an adaptation. Geraghty, for example, often explores how one theory or set of related theories affects several adaptations (“Feminism, Authorship, and

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<sup>4</sup> Stam’s entire list of causes for the bitter relationship between literature and adaptations: the assumption that “older arts are necessarily better arts;” “the dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between film and literature;” “iconophobia (fear of icons);” “logophilia” (love of words); “anti-corporeality” (distaste for bodily ideas); “films are suspectly easy to make and suspectly pleasurable to watch;” “class prejudice” and “parasitism” (4-7).

Genre: Adaptations of the Novels of Edna Ferber and Pearl S. Buck”). For example, the three *Scarlet Letter* adaptations I examine all represent female gender roles in varying ways as a result of the different times in which they were produced (1934, 1979 and 1995). I explore this in Chapter 3. Corrigan seems to feel that having multiple focuses is a positive in terms of the field’s future, as adaptation will serve to question traditional boundaries of the discipline (41). One of the opportunities is how adaptation fit into education, and many other scholars are exploring this avenue. In the following section I review what contemporary critics have done about using adaptations in classrooms as teaching tools.

#### *The Use of Adaptations in High School Classrooms*

High school teaching guides such as John Golden’s 2001 *Reading in the Dark* and Timothy Corrigan’s *Film and Literature* explore how the two media work together to inform their audiences better than would be possible alone. Golden in particular looks at teaching films in high school classrooms, though his work focuses less specifically on adaptation than I intend to do. He feels it is important to teach visual literacy because “kids tend to be visually oriented, able to point out every significant image in a three-minute MTV music video” (xiii) but are less adept at reading a written text. By showing students how they already employ the skills to read visual media, Golden argues that they will develop more sophisticated means of reading written texts. Many colleges and universities have offered film studies courses for years, but Leitch still claims that even universities have yet to tap into the resources adaptations have to offer: “I know of no English department, however generous in its views and text making or up-to-date in its theorizing of the relation between reading and writing, that assigns a central importance to adaptation studies. This is a shame, because the study of film adaptations has a great deal to offer contemporary English studies” (4). Leitch feels that classes dealing with adaptation studies

should not just be electives for graduate students working with film, but included within the required freshman composition courses (4). Leitch even proposes a basic four unit plan for educating students about adaptations. The first unit involves students “recovering the sense of adaptations as adaptations.” This means students will explore exactly what constitutes an adaptation, and how an adaptation relates to its source text, even if the source text is not well-known. The second unit explores “analyzing adaptations as necessary, contingent, and incessant writings.” Students will analyze a particular familiar source text and its adaptations, their receptions, and any other related materials. The goal is for students to understand that adaptation is inevitable and natural. By exploring how a film is received, students can better understand how and why audiences felt the way they did. For example, *West Side Story* is a musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. By discussing why that story has remained popular, and why the updated story took on the form it did (set in 1950s New York City, with Latino Americans and Caucasians serving as the respective Capulets and Montagues) students can understand how the same problems from Shakespeare’s time are still relevant today (like class disputes, teenage angst, violence, etc). The third unit relies on students “producing analyses in the form of adaptations” (14). Students will discuss adapting a short work or a piece of a longer work and defend their own cuts, additions and transformations. The fourth unit involves actually “transforming adapted screenplays into film adaptations” and filming the results. Students will adapt a short work or piece of a longer work, film their results and present an oral report on their experience (12 – 15). Although Leitch’s unit is for college level students, the same lessons and knowledge can be applied to high school students. My own unit does this, and if teachers have the resources available to them, they can start including adaptations in their classrooms in the near future. Other professors have created teaching guides for integrating



adaptation into English classrooms, but have not included Standard Course of Study Objectives as I have.<sup>5</sup>

With teachers like Golden and Jones and critics like Leitch, Desmond and Hawke pushing to change the status quo, a future for adaptations opens up possibilities for the standard high school classroom. Teachers using adaptations will provide a meaningful context for the films while also providing a new facet to language arts classes. Although film studies in its own right is a worthy enough topic, teachers rarely include it in regular high school curricula. In fact, the standard curriculum guide used for public education in North Carolina does not recognize film studies within its standard curriculum, and does not explicitly call for the teaching of films under language arts, and I point out in Chapter 4 that there is the opportunity to do so. The educational uses of these adaptations will address both film studies' current absence in classrooms, as well as the normal curriculum. Adaptations should be brought into the classroom and treated as their own texts that will work alongside a novel – not replace it. These films will serve as a medium for film language to be taught, as well as literature in their own right. Teachers can use an adaptation as a method for accessing the meaning of a story or narrative, or a to let students see visual representations of symbols or literary devices. In this way, teachers can let students learn to read the visual language in a way that will help with them written language, particularly when the two are put side by side. All public schools follow a Standard Course of Study, and although the NCSCOS never calls for films explicitly, the objectives listed provide the opportunity for non-print texts to be used. If film becomes a valid avenue for

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<sup>5</sup> For more teaching guides, see Loper, Nataline Jones “Adapting Composition, Arguing Adaptation: Using Adaptation in the Composition Classroom” and Desmond, John M. and Peter Hawkes *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*

instruction in classrooms, students will become more familiar with film language and popular media: many of the same conventions exist in television and advertising.

Once students become adept film viewers, adaptations will become another avenue for students to gain and practice skills and knowledge in and out of the classroom. Because we live in such a visually dominated culture, students with a strong visual literacy will excel in comprehension and communication. Adaptations serve as fresh interpretations of old stories that students may usually resist because they are old fashioned. Star vehicles like Roland Joffe's *The Scarlet Letter* (1995) may not be a box office or critical success, but it does start discussion about a classic text.

### Chapter 3: *The Scarlet Letter* Novel and Films

The following chapter is devoted to discussing the novel and film pairing I use in the sample unit in Chapter 5. In the first section of this chapter, I present my own reasons for selecting my novel and films as a model for teachers to use when considering using an adaptation in their classroom. Because *The Scarlet Letter* is so commonly used in high school classrooms, and because it represents a huge part of American culture and literary identity, I selected that novel to use as my model. I explore the themes, symbolism and characterization in the novel and discuss ways of implanting the novel and film's portrayals of these aspects. The following sections will then evaluate the selected novel and films individually, presenting material that will serve as background information for the unit. This chapter will conclude as I present some themes I will pick up again in Chapter 4 as I discuss the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and that will be included in the sample unit in Chapter 5.

Before selecting a novel and film pairing for a unit including adaptation that would be suitable for an English III high school classroom (that is, a typical 11<sup>th</sup> grade classroom following the standard public curriculum), there are a few things for teachers to consider. Teachers need to remember not to force the material that is not applicable. Leitch, for example, recognizes that although his unit proposes creating an adaptation, students may not have the time, skills or resources to do so (12). In a case such as this, teachers need to consider what the benefits of the original assignment are. To create an adaptation, students would need to think carefully about directorial choices, casting, mise en scene, and editing. In some way, these same goals will be met in other ways, like a written proposal. Instructors need to consider works that students struggle with for some reason: is the language in the novel too unfamiliar? Are there symbols or other literary devices that prevent students from understanding key plot points? Is

this a novel or work they would teach anyway? If the answers to these questions are yes, then they should consider how a film will help solve these problems.

As an example of how to treat a difficult text follows: many students struggle with Shakespearean plays because the language is so far removed from our particular dialect. By using an adaptation like Baz Luhrman's 1996 *Romeo + Juliet*, students can see the story told in a modern setting while still preserving Shakespeare's language – lesson plans for Shakespeare's works commonly address this problem, and an initial search for lesson plans on *Romeo and Juliet* using EBSCOHost produced over 1000 results. The fifth was a lesson plan by *Scholastic* that focused on translating Elizabethan English into contemporary English. The creator of the lesson plan claimed that most students view Shakespeare as a foreign language. This lesson provides “translations” of Shakespeare's text to supplement his words themselves so that students can read and understand. Using an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* would let students employ their visual literacy skills to fill in the gaps that open because of the “foreign language” (“Fluency Workout”). Many works have lesser known adaptations, or adaptations that are loosely based on a work, but as we will see later, these are still valuable teaching tools.

In the NCSCOS, English III typically focuses on American writers and literature, and an American text may prove more relatable for students in terms of the historical information in the unit. Although there are countless American texts being studied in high schools, I chose Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* because of its place in the American literary canon, and in the following section I discuss why the novel has been so important to American culture and the study of it remains so today. Furthermore, if teachers are familiar with a novel and have some experience with teaching or reading it, those who are using the sample unit will be able to devote more time to the films, instead of familiarizing themselves with a new novel as well as

the film terminology – and teachers generally have little time to spare once the semester gets going. *The Scarlet Letter* includes narrative points that provide interesting filmic choices – like the inclusion of the supernatural or fantastic in a text that is otherwise quite realistic, and later in this chapter I will discuss which particular moments may be used as teachable moments. (Note that I will not be providing specific scene locations here – instead I will discuss themes or longer scenes. In Chapter 5 I will provide scene locations as a part of lesson plans.) Also, a text with several adaptations would provide ample opportunity for discussion and analysis, and this particular story has been adapted more than ten times. *The Scarlet Letter* also carries with it many strong emotional ties to American heritage and literary identity. Nina Baym points out that Hawthorne now is considered a national hero because of his importance as a national figure as well as writer (72).

Because his novel is so important to American culture, its treatment in adaptations provides plenty of discussion topics for classes that might be missed with a more contemporary text that teachers use less frequently. As I mentioned earlier, some adaptations face more opposition because the original versions were so dearly loved, and this is true of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Nathaniel Hawthorne is commonly lauded as one of two great American writers, with the other being Herman Melville (Baym 62). During his lifetime, Hawthorne was very popular because of the short stories and articles he wrote for New England newspapers (Tompkins 631). During this time in American literature, there were very few American writers who had been born in the United States and who had achieved significant success. Hawthorne's success was tied up in American identity and pride: here was an author who was thoroughly American, who did not follow traditional British standards and who had achieved success based on his talent. Hawthorne's "American-ness" and his success have made him representative of the

ideal American Romantic writer. Hawthorne's writing was good – even by British standards – and that he was American meant that the new country was producing thinkers and writers worthy of Britain. *The Scarlet Letter*, his longest and most important work serves as the greatest example of his writing (Baym 72).

### *The Novel*

The novel, published in 1850, presents the story of Hester Prynne, a young woman who must face the unyielding judgment of her community after committing adultery in Puritan Salem, while still nurturing affection for the man she secretly loves: the community's Reverend Dimmesdale. Hawthorne's novel represents "Puritanism as being about control and governance 'of the body, the self and culture.' *The Scarlet Letter* deals in binaries that encompass the male and female, as culture and wilderness, rationality and irrationality, respectively" (Baym 63 - 64). Because the novel operates on so many levels applicable for classroom discussion, it is now commonly taught in high school classrooms, although Baym argues that this is the only reason people read it at all now (74). Consequently, most Americans have had some exposure to the work in some context, even if it was involuntary.

The novel already provides plenty of material for classroom instruction: the narrative calls for student interpretation of symbolism, metaphor and imagery. It also provides historical information and cultural background about a time in American history when being "American" was still quite foreign. Later in this chapter I review particular details from the novel that will be used for lessons. Of course, the novel has also been read for entertainment, and during Hawthorne's lifetime was incredibly popular, probably because of his success with short stories and in newspapers. Unfortunately, the novel has gone from a popular text enjoyed by many to a work that readers approach "reluctantly," generally because we feel we should read, not

necessarily because we want to (Johnson 1). Although “it is now one of the ten most frequently read novels in junior and senior high schools in the United States” (Johnson ix) the “forbidding” (1) stigma is still strongly attached to the novel. Using the films to illuminate the text and provide a next avenue for instruction will help students see the novel as a living, evolving narrative, and will help dispel these stigmas. These films will serve to bolster the novel’s study and help students explore various interpretations.

### *The Films*

In the lessons I provide later, I will be pulling information from only three of the *Scarlet Letter* adaptations. Although others may have useful material worth considering, I chose these particular three because they represent varied cultural context for study. The three films represent different times in film production as well as different production companies. Vignola’s 1934 was a mostly faithful, low budget black and white version that included seemingly out of place comic content. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) backed the production of the 1979 and the result was a painstakingly faithful, four-episode television film. However, the 1995 film, backed by Hollywood Pictures (an affiliate of Walt Disney), relied heavily on the big names attached to production. I will be providing more information about each film and then exploring a few key points for discussion: Hester’s portrayal in each film, the use of well-known stars in the 1995 film, and later I will also mention other moments in the novel and films that will inspire good analytical discussion.

The earliest adaptation I use is Robert Vignola’s 1934 black and white version, was produced by Majestic Pictures and starred Colleen Moore as Hester Prynne. This film was commercially quite successful, despite being produced during the Great Depression and therefore having a low budget. This film is also the only of the three to be subject to the Motion Picture

Production Code, which was introduced in 1930 and strictly monitored what was shown in films. Hal Erickson, a contemporary film reviewer from *The New York Times* claims the film was particularly worthwhile, especially in comparison to Joffe's 1995 version. Erickson's negative criticism focused on "inconsistent period costumes and phraseology; also, the direction and acting ranges from adequate to stilted." This adaptation remained quite faithful to the original text, often using large pieces of the novel for dialogue. Because of the novel's relative popularity in the years preceding the film's production – six of the ten adaptations were made before Vignola's - and because of its fidelity, Vignola and his writers probably assumed that much of their audience had read the novel. He was more focused on entertaining his audience with a relatively new technology – film with sound - through a familiar story. However, some elements of the film were not found in the novel.

The inclusion of the film's comic subplot involving a love triangle between three of the villagers is seemingly out of place in an otherwise faithful adaptation of the novel. The story, that Abigail Crackstone (Virginia Howell) chooses to marry Bartholomew (Alan Hale) instead of Samson (William Kent), has nothing to do with the main story except that it does mirror the triangle formed between Hester, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. The scenes of the love triangle were included at five different times throughout the film and came generally after longer, more dramatic segments (such as the opening scaffold scene). The comedic subplot is entirely fabricated by Vignola and writer Leonard Fields and seems as though Vignola is questioning the stereotypes attached to Puritanism, that typically assumes Puritans were stoic, somber and generally uninteresting. Even as the film opens, a foreword attached by the director explains that this story is a "portrait of Puritan life" that shows why the grim customs and harsh punishments "were a necessity of the time and helped shape the destiny of a nation." In the very first scene



however, two villagers are being punished for gossiping and laughing on the Sabbath. The other villagers mock them, and their punishments were made comical as well (Samson tries in vain to hide from Abigail, and she berates him for not honoring the Sabbath properly). Vignola seems to think that the Puritans were not as serious we might imagine them, or at least, wants his viewers to believe so. The subplot provides comic relief in the same style that Shakespeare and other classic writers like Sophocles would incorporate lesser characters into their tragedies: in her 1949 review of *Oedipus Rex*, Francis Donnelly points out that when sorrow is juxtaposed with joy, sorrow becomes more tragic, as joy becomes more fulfilling (246). Hester and Dimmesdale's doomed love becomes tragic when positioned so closely to Abigail's and Bartholomew's. While the main plot becomes more intense, lighter scenes with physical humor provides breaks in the drama. A 1934 audience might be uncomfortable with extended dramatic narratives. These comic breaks, often filled physical violence, amusing props and other elements of screwball comedy, would help the audience stay focused and still provide the same kind of popular comedy that audiences expected. The slapstick comedy might also be a result of the Production Code, which monitored sexuality very closely but was less strict with violence (Wexman 103).<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Hester and Dimmesdale's relationship was diluted, and the displaced sexuality was replaced by the physical violence featured in Abigail, Bartholomew and Samson's humorous relationship. The 1934's fidelity to the original text was otherwise very strong, but the 1979 version, the next film I discuss, was even more faithful.

Rick Hauser's 1979 adaptation is a direct result of the school-driven popularity of Hawthorne's novel. Because many teachers were using the novel in their classrooms, the demand

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<sup>6</sup> For a complete overview of the Production Code, see Virginia Wright Wexman's *A History of Film: Seventh Edition*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2009.

for an adaptation suitable for classrooms seemed like a logical step. PBS takes an active role in creating products and resources for teachers and even devotes a portion of their website to teachers, and ultimately was the company behind the 1979 production. When the film was shown on PBS, it ran in four segments and received only “lukewarm reviews” (Dunn 34) from critics. An unnamed *Variety* reviewer claimed that the adaptation included most of the material from the novel but did not rethink the work as a film (Dunn 34). However, it is good for use in the classroom: the segments were made for television slots but also fit conveniently in the block scheduling used in much of public education. Each new segment includes a brief summary of most recent plot points and prepares viewers for what is to come. Perhaps more importantly to some teachers, it remains very faithful to the original text. The 1934 adaptation, while largely faithful in what it did include, eliminated the reflection from the textual narration in the novel and as a result lost much of Hawthorne’s voice. The 1979 version attempted to follow Hawthorne’s novel very closely, and as Vignola’s 1934 version did, often used very large pieces of Hawthorne’s text for dialogue. However, I believe that Hauser was not relying on the audiences’ exposure to the novel; instead, Hauser represented the novel so faithfully that most of the novel was present in the film in some form.

Despite this version’s attempt at fidelity – often at the expense of becoming tedious – the most noticeable changes came in the interpretation of certain supernatural elements. While the novel does in fact contain supernatural elements (such as the glowing red A in the night sky) the 1979 takes the supernatural overtones to new heights. Michael Dunn points out that in particular, Roger Chillingworth’s character becomes increasingly demonic, and the director included one scene that showed Chillingworth’s reflection in a pool of water as having large, bat-like wings. This corresponding moment in the novel is meant to portray the manipulative power

Chillingworth wields over Hester, and how he has become less human over his years in Salem. There is an important note: Hawthorne himself never directly says that Chillingworth is evil – he maintains a cool, artist difference that never directly states that Chillingworth is demonic. The blending of the natural and supernatural was common with American Romantic writers, and Hawthorne himself was a master. Hawthorne, “working through the minds of superstitious onlookers,” hinted at these supernatural elements but never directly commented (Stubbs 1443). Within the adaptation, however, the director has the power to alter this detail. As far as Chillingworth is concerned, Hawthorne would often say that a suspicious man may think Chillingworth was possessed, but he would never say so himself. In the novel when Chillingworth looks at Dimmesdale’s chest and sees what then is the secret A Dimmesdale has been carving or burning on his flesh, Hawthorne states that “had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth. . . he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself” (121). Hawthorne here removes himself from direct judgment, making the man he mentions become the vehicle that reflects on Chillingworth.

Of course, as Seymour Chatman points out, the distanced author is impossible to achieve in film without frequent use of a voice-over narrator. Instead, characters and objects are merely displayed: use of a voice-over narrator does not use cinematic language but relies on “merely description by literary assertion transferred to film.” Scholars consider voice-over narrators something of an artistic deficit on the filmmaker’s part because the information given in the narration was not implied through mise en scene or other elements of cinematography (Chatman 450). In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hauser depicts Chillingworth as sinister as people would suppose *and* uses a voice over narrator, both explaining how sinister Chillingworth had become and showing the his own interpretation that pushes the limits of Hawthorne’s narrative. The 1995

adaptation took even more liberties: the opening credits duly note that the film is “freely adapted” from the original text. Because of Joffe’s removal from the original text, I assume that he was not relying on the audience’s previous knowledge of the novel. Instead, Joffe was more interested in pursuing his own inspired interpretation of Hawthorne’s original narrative.

Despite its fairly star-studded cast, the 1995 *The Scarlet Letter* was not a box office success. The cast was led by director Roland Joffe, who had had success with the Academy Award Winner *The Killing Fields* in 1984. However, not even the most highly paid actress of the time, Demi Moore (Daniels), or a successful director could save the adaptation from becoming “something so trashy and nonsensical” (James). The film was a poorly made melodrama: a term adaptation scholar Christine Geraghty says is often used to condemn Hollywood’s influence in general. She claims that melodramatic adaptations are doubly condemned for not only failing the original source, but also relying on the cheaper, more artificial tools of melodrama (9 - 10). The biggest criticism – aside from poor acting and a ridiculous plot that departs almost completely from Hawthorne’s narrative – came out of the movie’s introduction of “a number of 1990s preoccupations in an overly-schematic, formulaic and gestural way” (Bromley 74). The film portrayed Hester Prynne as an overly sexual, radically feminist Puritan who questioned authority and who is more concerned with her own desires than with morality. However, Hawthorne’s novel dedicates a great amount of time portraying Hester’s struggle with her sin: she sees her affair as a sin against God and wears the A not because the elders command her to do so but because she does truly desire repentance. Joffe’s Hester claims that the letter the elders place on her chest is “not a badge of my shame, but your own.” The struggle of faith against free will is reduced to an insolent woman’s refusal to be chastised, and Joffe’s Hester does not perceive of

any sin at all on her part. Although this film was not considered a successful adaptation, it will be a useful teaching tool for teachers to consider, as I will explain later.

These particular films create a varied unit of work when considered all together. In particular, Hester's portrayal in all three films is very different: in the 1934 version, Hester is a quiet and submissive but is a strong nurturing mother to Pearl – perhaps a reflection of gender roles at that time that deemed women are maternal figures that should be centered in the home, and should have little or no voice in politics. Despite this, Colleen Moore is a softer Hester than Hawthorne wrote (Dunn 32). Colleen Moore does not confront Chillingworth as forcefully as Hester does in the novel, nor does she question Pearl's morality as frequently or with as much fervor. This is probably a reflection of the Production Code that governed the content of film very closely at that time (Wexman 102). "Like the Ten Commandments, the Code's language was largely negative" and the Production Code restricted depictions of sexuality, criminal activity, vulgarity, obscenity and a whole list of "salacious, indecent or obscene" actions (Wexman 102). Undoubtedly a story dealing with adultery and religious questioning violated the code, and this may explain why Hester is a more subdued character.

In the 1995 Hollywood version, Hester is portrayed as a radical feminist in a Puritan society. However, Hester-as-feminist is not particularly shocking when viewed as following the trends of third-wave feminism that had grown stronger during the 1990s, which began as a reaction to the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s and emphasized "alliances among women that grew out of political and theoretical discussions" (Orr 30). The women backing the feminist movement wanted women to have strong, educated political voices, and targeted young women who were not interested in politics. The 1995 film does everything it can to give Hester a political and theoretical mind of her own. David Ansen of *Newsweek* said, "She may look like a

pilgrim, but she's a 1990s gal" (qtd in Daniels 3). Joffe's Hester is not a Puritan – she's a modern woman trapped inside a Puritan movie. The 1995 Hester is the unfavorable, stereotypical picture of a modern woman: contrary, willful and, of course, secretly lustful. Joffe seems to be exploring how a modern woman's mentality – and a strong-willed, defiant woman at that – would have changed Hawthorne's original narrative.

As Hester's portrayal reveals cultural information about gender roles in various points in the twentieth century, other elements show viewers cultural information that can be discussed in class. For example, the three films include different kinds of actors: the 1934's Colleen Moore struggled in her role after the success of Lillian Gish in an earlier adaptation. However, the director recast Henry B. Walthall as Roger Chillingworth, so he obviously was comfortable with having an actor repeat a performance. While neither Moore nor Walthall were particularly well-known stars, each was lauded for respectable performances, though Vignola certainly took a chance on Moore after Gish's popularity. Having Walthall repeat a performance lets the film prey on the 1926's success even more than it would have with a different actor – Chillingworth's character needs a strong, dominating male and Walthall obvious delivered. As Leitch points out, each new adaptation is created with the previous ones in mind, and Vignola casts Walthall knowing he was previously successful. Before the 1979 television mini-series, Meg Foster had had success on television but had no starring roles prior to this one and Hauser's selection was considered quite risky. John Heard, who played Dimmesdale, went on to have greater success, but no other well known actors contributed. However, Joffe was very concerned about including big names in his 1995 adaptation: their inclusion alone made the film a headliner at its release. These films obviously had different goals in mind during production: Joffe probably cared more about the success of a blockbuster than Vignola or Hauser, who focused more on establishing a

faithful and respectable adaptation. Additionally, Joffe's selection of Demi Moore is strange, considering the characters that Moore represented in the past. In the years preceding *The Scarlet Letter*, Moore starred in a number of movies that emphasized her beauty and sexuality, including Adrian Lyne's 1993 *Indecent Proposal*, where Moore played a young wife whose sexuality is literally bought by a stranger. Moore had starred in roles where she was deliberately sexualized, and Hester was a woman whose sexuality was supposed to be repressed. Moore inevitably becomes even more sexualized: bathing scenes seem more scandalous because Hester is a Puritan – even if she a radical Puritan. Because the 1995 adaptation was the most anticipated and the worst received, a conversation about the star system and the effect of a famous cast may later help students why films become star vehicles.

In this chapter, I have worked to provide a practical background for the novel and the films in the sample unit, but it is important for teachers to remember that lesson plans grow and change nearly every time they are used. Similarly, this information will serve as a springboard for other discussions but should not limit them to these topics. Hopefully the film selections will provide plenty of opportunity for classroom discussion. As I pointed out, these three adaptations represent different kinds of film experiences. As with any literary work, the most important feature is usually a work's purpose: Vignola's purpose was to entertain his audience with new film technology and sound, Hauser's purpose was to educate a public audience, and Joffe's purpose was to challenge the traditional version of a familiar story with unexpected character portrayals. In Chapter 4 I discuss how these adaptations can be used to teach in a high school classroom, and will focus closely on meeting the objectives in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

## Chapter 4: Adaptation in the Classroom

In this chapter I explore the practical use of adaptation in the high school classroom and, in particular, how the material works in conjunction with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). The first section of this chapter provides a brief introduction to the NCSCOS and discusses its background, purpose, and a few guiding principles. The following section analyzes the relationship between the NCSCOS and film adaptation: notably, how films can be used to satisfy the objectives in the Standard Course of Study just as print texts are. I conclude by reflecting on the goals expressed in the NCSCOS, and how a unit using film adaptation would both achieve those goals and inspire students to learn.

North Carolina's Department of Education emphasizes the importance of the Standard Course of Study by requiring all educators in the public arena to meet its standards and "outlines the curriculum, programs not confined to subject areas, general standards, material support, and staffing which should be provided in all schools throughout the state" ("NC Standard Course of Study"). The NCSCOS is updated approximately every five years, with the most recent revision being in 2004. North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provides a website, *NCPublicSchools.org*, featuring a complete version of the NCSCOS as well various introductions, forewords and appendices. Updates and announcements can be accessed through this website and is the most updated resource for public instruction standards or information. In Chapter 5 when I provide my sample unit I will be pulling the objectives listed there from DPI's website. As stated on DPI's website, the 2004 revision of the NCSCOS has gone from a "detailed, prescriptive curriculum guide to a more flexible guide to instruction." As a result, the NCSCOS focuses on objectives for student learning as opposed to particular facts that students must memorize. While this does seem to be a positive change in instructional philosophy, the



end result is that teachers are guided by objectives and accountability: teachers must be able to demonstrate that their students have acquired new knowledge or skills. A specific advantage of this “flexible guide” is that it neither requires nor dismisses any particular texts as long as they meet objectives, and teachers may use a non-print text to meet them. In fact, five of the six English III NCSCOS competency goals may be met using “print or non-print” texts. It is fair to assume that non-print texts include films: clearly the language of the NCSCOS allows for film to be used in classrooms. Below I highlight several specific areas that allow not only for the inclusion of film in the curriculum but also call for film to be included as print texts are included.

*North Carolina Standard Course of Study: English III Curriculum*

In this section of this chapter I provide a quick overview of the history and goals of the NCSCOS for English III and how these goals are expressed for teacher use. The NCSCOS also outlines information about “learning strands” that I discuss, as well as common content that provides a basic uniform content for each grade level that evolves as students learn. Before I explore how exactly teachers can incorporate film adaptation into their classroom with complete confidence, I review the NCSCOS and the statewide expectations therein.

Early in the twentieth century, American education was becoming carefully regulated. Standard Courses of Study (SCOS) were introduced statewide and today state-sponsored websites detail both the objectives themselves as well as secondary sources, such as teaching materials, to help achieve those goals. North Carolina lawmakers established the NCSCOS in 1898 as a way to standardize what students across the state to ensure a high quality education in all public schools. Later I look more closely at the specific goals listed in the NCSCOS, so here I review some of the themes that tie the curriculum guide together and maintain high levels of educational quality.

As the State Board regularly revises and updates the NCSCOS, the language of the guide does maintain a sense of self-reflection as well as the unending need to evolve. The NCSCOS's philosophy makes it clear that the NCSCOS changes with the times, and that currently its main goal is "preparing students for the demands of an information age." The philosophy lists that there are several ways that students and teach use language in a classroom, and students need to master them all. The philosophy also recognizes that language arts is a subject that can become integrated into other subjects and also may absorb skills from other disciplines: after all, even mathematicians need verbal and written language. By encouraging the blending of subjects and disciplines, the NCSCOS "enhances the learner's ability to move from the known to the unknown, to see relationships, and to make generalizations" (*Department of Public Instruction*). Ultimately, the idea is for students have the knowledge and skill to achieve these same goals outside the classroom. The NCSCOS is not the only education standard that makes room for film. In fact, other organizations including the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) "have all recommended that teachers include in their curricula not only the events, experiences and creative expressions of America's diverse cultures but also what has been more generally termed media literacy skills" (Gerster 13). National education organizations are requiring the teaching of film, and NCSCOS makes room for it – it is time for teachers to simply begin the process.

In order to make this possible, DPI makes it very clear what the expectations are for students and teachers in North Carolina. The NCSCOS provides a reflection of its purpose and intention at the beginning of the guide, and explains that its goal "is to teach students the language abilities they need to communicate effectively as individuals and as contributing members of society." These abilities refer to a number of competency goals that each deal in a

different arena of the language arts discipline. The idea is that students will eventually achieve mastery in all of them. In essence, students need to be able to interpret a variety of sources and texts and apply the information in meaningful scenarios. For example, Competency Goal 3 states that “the learner will examine argumentation and develop informed opinions.” This competency goal is then broken down into smaller objectives that are dealt with individually, and each one is aimed towards students learning the art of rhetoric. Students can use these skills outside the classroom: any argument or recognition of an argument relies on the skills that are targeted with Competency Goal 3. These “language abilities” touch on other specific areas, and in the next section I provide information about three different formats of language listed by the NCSCOS.

*The North Carolina Standard Course of Study and Adaptation*

Below I discuss why the integration of film into a language arts classroom is necessary: the NCSCOS acknowledges the need for a variety of texts and provides rationale in the material prefacing the NCSCOS. There, the NCSCOS provides material about language strands and common content that focus on unifying grade-level curriculum. The information about strands of language and common content in classrooms not only provides a standard goal for all levels of education, but also pushes educators to consider a variety of texts – again, these Competency Goals clearly state that teach should use print and non-print texts.

The NCSCOS focuses on three particular “strands” of language use that distinguish how students use and develop language: oral language, written language and media/technology use. The NCSCOS reinforce these particular strands at each grade level, with objectives created to specifically satisfy an individual strand, or to satisfy several at once.<sup>7</sup> Lessons using film

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<sup>7</sup> NCSCOS Objective **6.02** clearly refers to oral and written language: “Discern and correct errors in speaking and writing at a level appropriate to eleventh grade by reviewing and refining purposeful use of varying sentence types

adaptations utilize all three strands at one: the oral language spoken in the film, the written language in the novel and interpretation of film media. Individually, these three different facets of learning can challenge students, but using all three pushes learners to think in creative ways.

“Common content” is another feature of the NCSCOS that is present in all grade levels but changes based on students’ ability. The common content for language arts divides the subject into three smaller categories as listed on DPI’s website:

- language of the discipline (plot, theme, setting, etc.);
- language conventions (sentence structure, mechanics, spelling and punctuation, etc.); and
- different genre (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama). (“NC Standard Course of Study”)

These three categories encompass the various topics a language arts teacher addresses in all lessons: grammar, vocabulary, literary criticism, etc. Just as common content applies to print texts, they also of course apply to films and adaptation. Film studies require a fluency in the discipline’s language, knowledge of film conventions and standards and a familiarity of genres and the expectations of those genres. For example, to better understand a why *Blazing Saddles* is a successful parody, a viewer must have a basic understanding of the genre it mimics. By simply extending the expectations listed in the NCSCOS and making sure those expectations are met using film, teachers can certainly integrate film into their classrooms with little or no trouble. Teachers who have no experience with film studies may be reluctant to include material that is unfamiliar; however, using an adaptation will make this transition easier. Teachers will be

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with correct punctuation; editing for correct spelling and mechanics. However, NCSCOS Objective **2.02** requires students to use oral language, written language and media and technology: “Examine and explain how culture influences language through projects such as demonstrating proficiency in accessing and sending information electronically, using conventions appropriate to the audience.”

familiar with the basic narrative information, and may have taught the novel before. Having this background knowledge already means that teachers can concentrate on the filmic aspects instead of struggling with both. In order to supplement their film knowledge, teachers will want to do their own research and reading. I recommend David Bordwell's textbook *Film Art: An Introduction*. This text is commonly used for introductory film classes and provides information about film history, conventions and terminology. The unit in the appendix includes all notes and definitions, but teachers will still want to supplement this material.

The specific grade requirements also dictate the feasibility of integrating film into a language arts classroom. Each grade level has its own list of standards and objectives with specific requirements, and some teachers may find that integrating film is not so simple. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade SCOS, for example, emphasizes students' ability to express their own ideas, evaluate information and refine argumentation skills. As I have mentioned before, English III typically focuses on American literature and helps students understand cultural significance of works as a part of American heritage. Additionally, DPI states that students need to relate their experiences to the past, to explore diversity in America and to better understand the relationship between the past and present.<sup>8</sup> By using adaptation as a teaching tool, teachers will be able to help their students do all of these things: examining a variety of adaptations ranging from early to contemporary films will help students understand how culture might affect a particular story. Carole Gerster claims that teaching "feature films, narrative shorts, and documentaries provides an excellent means for students to gain multicultural and visual literacy: to understand changing

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<sup>8</sup> NCSCOS Objectives **1.01** Create memoirs that give an audience a sense of how the past can be significant for the present by elaborating upon a significant past episode from the student's current perspective; projecting the student's voice in the work through reflective interpretation of relationships to people and events.

images of and ideas about America's cultural diversity" (7). Adaptations in particular can reference a time in American history before film: a novel like *The Scarlet Letter* was adapted many times, and brings Hawthorne's nineteenth century preoccupations, as well as those of a twenty-first century film producer. As critic Michael Dunn points out, these additions, such as Hauser's focus on the supernatural and Joffe's feminist overtones, are more pronounced in some adaptations, and as a consequence the adaptation's cultural stamp affects how we view the story (35). These symptomatic overtones, or the implications made by the film that result from its cultural timestamp, provide more opportunity for discussion. Demi Moore is strong feminist Hester Prynne when compared to Colleen Moore: the gender roles in 1934 did not allow for Colleen Moore to be as defiant and willful as Demi Moore (32). Also, examining how a contemporary director recreates a past setting and environment will help students understand how American culture views a particular time and place in our history: Gerster argues that we must make students critical viewers instead of passive viewers, and doing so will make them more literate in visual media (11). Multiple adaptations push this idea even further: not only will students see how a contemporary director deals with Puritan social norms and taboo, but they will also see how an early filmmaker did, and how a filmmaker focused on education did. *The Scarlet Letter* and its adaptations would be ideal for achieving these objectives: because many adaptations have been made at various times by various directors, they will provide a strong base of comparison from which students can draw. As Leitch notes, multiple adaptations studied in context create a new dynamic for the original work. In Chapter 5, I will list the specific objectives for each lesson, provide rationale and evaluation strategies. In the following section of this chapter, however, I will discuss lesson plan ideas and themes that can serve as a springboard for teachers using *The Scarlet Letter*.

### *The Scarlet Letter and Areas for Study*

A unit plan on *The Scarlet Letter* that does not include any use of film could include approximately five to eight lessons dealing exclusively with the novel. This would cover at least two school weeks, which would allow plenty of time for students to read and respond to the novel on their own. Of course, this would also allow time for other short assignments to take simultaneously (such as writing tests). Lessons on *The Scarlet Letter* could be grouped closer together or spread further apart based on the class's reading speed and other needs. Lessons in a non-film unit would probably include some background information on Hawthorne and the novel, use of imagery, use of metaphor, prediction-making and conflict resolution. Other lessons might involve characterization or student writing modeling Hawthorne's style. The NCSCOS has objectives that address these issues, although at times simply reviewing the materials will be useful for high school classes, as students may misinterpret sections of the novel or miss important information.<sup>9</sup>

A unit involving filmed adaptations becomes a different thing entirely, though can include all of the topics I mentioned above. I outline some areas of the novel and films that are particularly good for teachers to use as discussion points in the classroom. For example, lessons about Hawthorne and his background might include the introduction to the 1979 version by PBS: students would watch the opening credits and make predictions about the novel and the film. The opening credits introduce viewers to Hawthorne himself, and he addresses the audience directly in much the same way that Hawthorne does in the opening section of the novel. A lesson on

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<sup>9</sup> NCSCOS Objective **1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by identifying and analyzing text components (such as organizational structures, story elements, organizational features) and evaluating their impact on the text; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

conflict resolution could include clips from the ending of each film as well as a discussion about how these endings work in context of the rest of the story, and students can make predictions about which will be the most like the novel.<sup>10</sup> This would be particularly effective while using *The Scarlet Letter* and its adaptations because of the narrative's varied endings in the films. Vignola's 1934 film is much shorter than the other two films, and the entire last scene is only a few minutes long. Hauser's 1979 film is much longer and uses large pieces of the novel's text for dialogue and the voice-over narration. Joffe's 1995 film, on the other hand, departs from the novel's ending entirely and culminates in an attack on the Puritan village by the neighboring Native Americans. Chillingworth is killed in the attack and Hester and Dimmesdale leave the village together, seemingly to live a life of happiness and peace. Students could view these different endings and document their reactions. These lessons would employ not only their critical thinking skills, but also the skills they have acquired through studying film. A lesson like this can address several NCSCOS objectives and communicate in a variety of ways, which means lessons are more efficient and can appeal to a greater number of students.

Of course, a good lesson will also focus on sharpening students' analytical thinking: after reading certain sections of the novel, students could then watch the corresponding section of the film and discuss why certain directorial choices were made. Students could write responsive papers to these scenes, select which one they thought was the most appropriate interpretation – though not necessarily accurate – and then provide support for their selection.<sup>11</sup> This could be

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<sup>10</sup> NCSCOS Objectives: **1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by making inferences, predicting, and drawing conclusions based on text.

<sup>11</sup> NCSCOS Objective **1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.



used in conjunction with the lesson on conflict resolution I mentioned earlier: a responsive paper would be an excellent tool for assessment that would require students to be active listeners, viewers and readers. Additionally, students would identify elements of foreshadowing and make predictions for the novel and each film, and explain their reasoning. Key scenes for this assignment, which could be repeated at various points in the unit, include the first scaffold scene, the midnight vigil on the scaffold, the conversation between Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest, and the final scene on the scaffold. These particular scenes are excellent for close readings and responses because they serve as pivotal points in the narrative's action. These scenes are the most action-oriented of the novel, as opposed to more introspective and reflective sections, but still communicate information non-verbally. The conversation between Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest is an excellent scene to use for this lesson because of the different relationships the novel and in the films. In the novel, Hester and Dimmesdale are affectionate and caring, but never kiss or embrace passionately, while in the films they embrace, kiss, or shout their confession of love out loud, depending on the adaptation. Additionally, some of these scenes are longer in the novel and had to be edited for the films' use, and students can discuss why particular elements were eliminated. In Vignola's 1934 adaptation, Dimmesdale does not preach his Elocution Day sermon as he does in the novel: students could discuss if his death was as meaningful without it.

However, lessons that are not concerned with narrative information can also use scenes from these films. Hawthorne's novel uses various symbols and image-rich language, and examining the film's representations of symbols can also help students interpret these particular details. For example, in the opening of the main story the narrator describes his discovery of the scarlet letter A in the town's Custom House. Many students skim this section and find very little

interesting in the novel, but examining the corresponding scenes in the films may help students understand that Hawthorne himself is addressing the reader about his experience at the Custom House, the nature of Puritan villagers, and how they remember Hester and her scarlet A. This is evident in the 1979 adaptation: a narrator identifies himself as Nathaniel Hawthorne and then goes on to explain how he found the scarlet letter in the Custom House attic and felt compelled to write its story. Another popular symbol is the scarlet letter itself: comparing how the three different actresses wear and represent the scarlet letter will help students understand the burden that Hester carries with her at all times, and how each filmmaker viewed the symbol. Colleen Moore's scarlet letter is quite plain, and because the film is in black and white, the image loses some of the symbol's power. Meg Foster's letter is very intricately sewn but is crafted from gold thread, not scarlet, perhaps to make it more gaudy and showy, but then the symbolic associations with the color red – passion, anger, lust – no longer apply. Demi Moore's scarlet letter is similar to Colleen Moore's in shape and design, but she wears hers only for the satisfaction of the Puritan elders, and says so. Another favorite symbol from the novel is the red A in the sky that Hester and Dimmesdale see as they stand on the scaffold at night: a supernatural and unexplained phenomenon that is represented in different ways in each film, either as a terrible lightning storm with glowing shapes in the sky, as a bright and obviously glowing A, or is completely unrepresented in Joffe's version. The films can also be used to help students better understand basic film language: there will have to be some time spent explaining transitions, camera distance and other aspects of cinematography. Gerster points out that teaching students to read film as they read print text will help them become more visually literate, which she feels is a necessity in our "image saturated culture" (8 – 10). Additionally, having students consider each

film's treatment of the original text can help them draw conclusions about three distinctly different times in American film and culture.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, there are more opportunities in each film than the ones I have listed above. These particular points are some of the favored discussion topics for *The Scarlet Letter* and also happen to work well for each film. A teacher following the NCSCOS can use the discussion points listed above – and probably other Standard Courses of Study outside North Carolina. Understanding the language of the Standard Course of Study helps teachers find new and innovative ways of meeting the same objectives, and teachers should explore the text to look for other opportunities for growth. The NCSCOS focuses on achievements: essentially the objectives are a list of skills that students need to master before they can “articulate important issues of a technology - based society.” Film adaptations can achieve this, and in the following chapter I provide an overview of the lessons in my model unit.

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<sup>12</sup> NCSCOS Objective **5.01** Interpret the significance of literary movements as they have evolved through the literature of the United States by understanding influences that progress through the literary movements of the United States.

## Chapter 5: Unit Overview for *The Scarlet Letter*

This chapter is different in purpose and format than the previous four chapters. Here, I present summaries lessons from a model unit for a high school classroom. Each summary highlights the main goals and activities from each day, as well as homework and class procedures. I provide lesson plans themselves well as additional information and materials to be used during those lessons in the appendix. The result is a complete unit ready to be used in a high school classroom. Teachers who use this will find these lessons suitable for most high schools, but all the lessons have room to evolve and serve as a good starting point.

Before discussing the lesson summaries and presenting the lesson plans, I review a few common characteristics of the lesson plans and note what materials I do not provide for teachers. Although I do present as much as possible here, it is necessary for teachers to acquire some materials on their own. Readers who are not familiar with lessons plans and typical formats will find this section particularly helpful, and more seasoned veterans may want to review this section to understand why I make certain stylistic choices in my lessons plans.

All teachers have their own style for creating and recording lessons. Many schools require that teachers follow one particular style of lesson plans, but most formats are intuitive enough that new formats are easily translatable. The lesson plan I use is a very basic adaptation of the Six-Point Lesson Plan, which is a popularly used format in many North Carolina school systems.<sup>13</sup> The Six-Point Lesson Plan is simple to use and easy to follow, but I briefly explain its characteristics for readers who are unfamiliar with its format.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix B for the Six-Point Lesson Plan

The Six-Point Lesson Plan's name comes from the division of each lesson into six distinct components: Focus and Review, Statement of Objectives, Teacher Input, Guided Practice, Independent Practice and Closure. These different pieces are included and arranged so that students are introduced to new material or knowledge and then develop a mastery of it over the course of the lesson. During the focus and review portion of the lesson, teachers introduce students to the lesson and material and explain how it relates to previous knowledge. This is also a good time for teachers to refresh students' memories about information or vocabulary that will be used in this lesson. The statement of objectives is essentially as it sounds: teachers explain what knowledge or skills the students will have at the lesson's conclusion. They can also indicate which SCOS objectives are being met with this lesson. During the teacher input, teachers present new information or material to students. Guided practice is an opportunity for teachers to provide a model for the students on how to deal with this material. The independent practice is a time for students to mimic, improve upon or enhance what the teacher presented during the guided practice. Often students produce something (such as a written work or project) that demonstrates that they have mastered the knowledge or skill. Teachers end the lesson with closure, which provides time for students to reflect on the learning experience, respond to the lesson, present their work or ask questions.

Each stage of the lesson is very important: by scaffolding student learning and then making students accountable for a product in the end, teachers are ensuring student success and productivity. A basic Six-Point Lesson Plan provides space for each of these activities, as well as the materials needed and the SCOS objectives. Teachers often format lesson plans differently but focus on the same main ideas. My own lesson plan is combination on the Six-Point Lesson Plan, a lesson plan format given to me by a college professor, and changes I have made during my

own teaching.<sup>14</sup> I often find that the Six-Point Lesson Plan does not provide enough space for important reminders and reflection.

The first addition is a space for my own class objectives at the top of the lesson plan. The second addition is a place for important questions or vocabulary. I have students respond to these questions during the focus and review section of class, and the vocabulary may be what I provide during my teacher input. The third addition is a space for the assessment: this space allows me to explain the assessment and explain what product my students will be creating. For example, if I conclude class by having students do a writing assignment, I reference the assignment and include any notes about it. Finally, I include a space labeled “Teacher Comments/Reflection.” As many teachers know, a lesson may not follow the format expected, or unanticipated questions or difficulties may arise as they teach. This space allows me to react to the lesson so that if I use it again, I can make changes or accommodations.

I designed the following unit for a high school English III classroom. The unit will take approximately two weeks of class instruction, but can be changed to take more or less time. Each day of instruction includes one lesson plan, the complete handouts and notes and assessment material. The lessons, handouts, notes and assessment materials will be provided in the appendix and categorized by day. The lesson plans also include all the movie times from the films when they are used, but teachers need to acquire copies of all three films and copies of the novel before they begin the unit. Additionally, many lessons call for students to use a writing journal. This is not necessary, but does ensure that student work stays organized.

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix B and C for the Finley plan and my lesson plan format

The following section of the chapter consists of a brief explanation of each day's lesson. Lesson plans and additional materials will be supplemented in Appendix A and notes on their use will be indicated in the lesson plan itself.

### *Lesson Summaries*

Lesson 1 - Because students will have little or no knowledge of basic film terminology at this point, and because it will be necessary for the discussion of films later in the unit, the first day of the unit introduces and uses some film terminology. This lesson is a necessary step towards student success. The teacher introduces new film terminology and defines terms for students. The teacher then distributes a handout for the students to complete. This handout should be saved so students can refer back to it during the unit and for the test. The teacher will close the lesson by having students define the terms orally and then by assigning the night's homework: to read the introductory chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Custom House." An important note is that because this is a long chapter (approximately 35 pages) students may need more time for reading. If this is the case, consider teaching this lesson on a Friday and allowing the weekend for students to read "The Custom House."

Lesson 2 – This lesson serves as the introductory lesson to the novel and films. Students will have read "The Custom House" and will be able to respond to their reading and the opening of Hauser's 1979 adaptation. The teacher will provide biographical information about Hawthorne, and also discuss "The Custom House" chapter, allowing opportunity for students to ask questions. The next part of the lesson focuses on a short clip from Hauser's 1979 adaptation. The teacher asks students to think about the priorities of the written text and the priorities of the film clip, and how priorities are communicated visually. The teacher then has students watch the clip and apply the film terminology from the previous lesson. The lesson's conclusion focuses on

why particular choices were made within the clip. The teacher closes the lesson by assigning that night's homework: the following three chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Lesson 3 – Lesson 3 has two main goals: to ensure student comprehension of the previous night's reading and to study the characterization of Hester Prynne. During the first half of the lesson, students create a summary of the first four chapters of the novel by working individually and then combining their work to form a summary of the novel's plot. The teacher has students write their combined list on the board and the students copy this into their journals. This exercise helps students look for details by practicing their skills in close reading. The second half of the lesson focuses on Hester's characterization. Students work in collaborative groups to describe Hester, based on their reading and discussion. Then the teacher plays a portion of Joffe's 1995 *Scarlet Letter*, and asks students to compare the character of Hester in the film to the character of Hester in the novel. This activity enhances students' ability to read film and draw conclusions based on their findings. To help students better understand this distinction, the teacher also looks more into Demi Moore as an actress. The lesson's assessment is a short paragraph in their journals that will reflect this discussion and express students' thoughts on the comparison. For homework, students will read the following three chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*. Students should also study for a quiz on film terminology.

Lesson 4 – This lesson begins with the short quiz on film terminology. This lesson is the first of a series of screening lessons that will give students the chance to view and analyze the various *Scarlet Letter* adaptations. During the screenings, students take structured notes using note-taking system I include in the supplemental materials. This note-taking system ensures that students take accurate notes in their journals that will accumulate over the course of the multiple screenings. These notes should focus on how characters are represented on screen, not on the



plot. Students should use the film terminology they have learned to better analyze how films communicate information. The teacher plays the clips listed in the lesson plan: all correspond to the opening sequence of the novel. Note that this does not necessarily correspond to the opening sequence of each film: Joffe's 1995 film begins prior to the novel's opening, and it may be worth explaining this to students. After playing the various film clips, the teacher then asks students about the notes they took. Because this is first screening exercise, the teacher may need to guide students more carefully than in later lessons. In closing, the teacher assigns that night's homework: chapter 7 and 8.

Lesson 5 – This lesson encourages students to think reflexively about how each character is viewed by the villagers. Students will be writing a diary entry from the point of view of a villager watching Hester's confession. They must try to maintain the mood of either a movie or the novel, and reflect on each of the three main characters. They will complete the diary entry and some may read them aloud. They will type them for homework. The teacher ends this lesson by assigning the weekend's reading: chapters 9 and 10.

Lesson 6 – Lesson 6 is another screening lesson that focuses on the representation of Hester and Pearl, and their relationship with the village. The teacher opens this lesson by having students respond to a section passage from *The Scarlet Letter*. This passage describes Pearl's transfixion with the scarlet letter on Hester's breast. Because Pearl is such a strange child, she often causes Hester pain and stress. In the novel, the villagers threaten to remove Pearl from Hester's care. The clips contain the corresponding scenes from the films, which should in turn match with the students' reading from the previous night. Students are to take notes again using their charts from lesson 4, again focusing on cinematography. After playing the clips, the teacher asks questions that will direct students' thinking towards the differences in adaptations, and why

certain directorial choices were made. The homework for the night is for students to read chapter 10 and 11.

Lesson 7 – This lesson focuses on the use of symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne often used symbols to communicate information, and this lesson's goal is for students to better analyze these symbols and understand their representation in both print and film. The teacher opens this lesson by having students write two sentences about each of the following characters or objects from the book: the scarlet letter, Pearl, the rose bush and the meteor. Students may use their book. The teacher then divides the class into small groups that will each focus on a particular symbol. There are discussion questions for each symbol listed in the lesson plan, and each group must have an answer for each, and evidence supporting that answer. The teacher then regroups the students, mixing groups so that they represent all the symbols. Then students explain their group's findings, while their peers take notes or ask questions. The teacher ends the lesson by having students return to their seats and write a short paragraph explaining what each symbol in *The Scarlet Letter* represents. This is an excellent review for the exam, and also enhances students' critical thinking skills, listening skills and analytical skills. The night's homework is for students to read chapters 13 – 15.

Lesson 8 – This lesson opens with a student poll: the teacher will ask students which character in *The Scarlet Letter* is they find to be the most sympathetic. Students will write a response in their journal and explain their reasoning. The teacher then introduces the clips for the lesson's screening, all of which focuses on the relationship between Hester and Chillingworth. Students are to again take notes and think specifically about how both Hester and Chillingworth are depicted, and how audiences are meant to view them. During the discussion after the clips, the teacher asks questions that aim at students verbalizing their thoughts and their proof: they

should try to provide evidence from the film that guides audiences' viewing. The teacher will assign the following two chapters, 16 and 17, as homework.

Lesson 9 – The teacher opens the lesson by having students respond to a passage from the novel, in which Dimmesdale reflects on the secretive nature of men. After discussing the quotation, the teacher then divides students into small group and assigns them a character. Using a handout on characterization, students are to analyze their character's action, words and thoughts, and how audiences are to respond to them. Students are to use evidence from the films based on their screening notes. Once they have completed this activity, students will then create a Facebook profile for their character. This activity helps students relate to the characters, so that they understand them as people and not as literary figures. Students will present their profile to the class, sign them and hang them in the classroom. The teacher will close the lesson by assigning that night's reading: chapter 18 and 19.

Lesson 10 – The teacher opens lesson 10 by having students reflect on their experience reading and understanding key plot points in the novel: in particular, who Pearl's father is and when they realized this. The teacher then introduces the film clips for today, all of which reveal the relationship between Hester and Dimmesdale. There are two clips from each film for this lesson, so the teacher will need to be prepared to locate the clips quickly. These clips reveal both character's personalities and students are to try to determine information about them based on mise en scene and cinematography. Again, they are to use their screening charts. After the clips, the teacher then encourages discussion about the clips by asking questions, all of which are provided and focus on the representation of Hester and Dimmesdale in the novel and in the films. Students will write a response to this in their journals and must provide evidence to support their thoughts. The teacher closes the lesson and assigns the night's reading: chapters 20 – 21.

Lesson 11 – As the lesson begins, students will write in their journals about how watching an adaptation does or does not enhance their experience with *The Scarlet Letter*. Lesson 11’s format is slightly different from the previous lessons, and takes the form of a seminar discussion about adaptations. Students will form a large circle with their desks and the teacher leads them in a discussion about the effects of watching the adaptations. I have provided answers to all questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Students should listen carefully and take notes, as much of this discussion reflects the topics covered in the exam. After the discussion has finished, students will move their desks back to their original places and again reflect on how watching adaptations affects their experience with a text. The night’s homework is for students to complete *The Scarlet Letter*.

Lesson 12 – Lesson 12 includes the film conclusions as well as a review for the exam. The lesson opens with students writing down any questions they have and one question they would expect to see on the exam. The teacher will then show clips from each film’s conclusion, and ask student about their thoughts and reactions. The second half of the lesson will then review the unit and prepare students for the exam. The review will consist of questions that reflect on material about *The Scarlet Letter* but will also allow students to think critically about their own conclusions on the material. The night’s homework is to study for the exam.

#### *Exam Summary*

The unit’s exam is worth a total of fifty points and is divided into three sections: definitions, short answers and essay questions. The first section asks for students to define the film terminology they have learned and used throughout the unit. The short answer questions ask for students to think about Puritan society and how Hawthorne represents it, and for students to identify and explain the use of symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*. The essay portion of the exam

allows students to answer one of three prompts about *The Scarlet Letter* novel and films. The first question asks students to compare the characterization of Hester Prynne in the novel and in one of the films. The second question asks students to label Hester, Dimmesdale or Chillingworth as the most sinful character in the novel and provide evidence for their reasoning. The third question asks students to consider why the setting of *The Scarlet Letter* plays an important role in the narrative. The essays will be written on a separate piece of paper.

These lessons take the shape of a complete unit that both teaches *The Scarlet Letter* and introduces students to film studies. By using an adaptation, teachers will still cover material from texts but will also push students to think critically, not only about the text itself, but also about film culture, visual language and cultural representations of familiar characters and stories. Students will find that *The Scarlet Letter* adaptations are vastly diverse, and present the story and the characters in strikingly singular ways. By having students consider adaptations made in different times, by different directors, and with different goals, students will better understand how films affect audiences, and how familiar stories change and evolve over time.

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## Appendix A: The Scarlet Letter Unit Plan

### **Lesson 1: Introduction to Unit – Film Terms**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

#### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by identifying and analyzing text components (such as organizational structures, story elements, organizational features) and evaluating their impact on the text.

#### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to show a clear understanding of basic film terminology.

#### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Frame

Camera distance – long, medium, close up

Camera angle – high, low

*Mise-en-scene*

Editing – Continuity editing, cut, wipe, dissolve, iris

Shot duration – long, short

Montage

#### **Class Actions and Activities**

(15) Focus and review – Have students respond to the following questions: Do you enjoy watching movies? Why or why not? Is it hard to watch a movie? Why or why not? Do you think movies should be studied like books are studied? Why or why not? Allow students ten minutes to write responses and then ask a few students for their reactions. Explain the purpose of the entire unit briefly.

- (5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today’s lesson. Use class objectives shown above.
- (25) Teacher input – Tell students to take notes on the following information. Explain the vocabulary listed in the section above using the information in the teacher copy of handout 1.
- (5) Guided practice – Distribute student handout 1. Show students how to fill in the blank spaces using the information you have just explained.
- (25) Independent practice – Have students complete handout 1.
- (15) Closure – Go around the room and call on students to define each term. Tell students they will have quiz on these terms in three days time. Their homework is to read The Custom House (approx 35 pages) from the beginning of The Scarlet Letter. Collect handout 1 for assessment.

### **Assessment**

Student handouts and verbal assessment

### **Materials**

Handout 1 – Teacher copy

Handout 1 – Student copy

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 2: Scarlet Letter Introduction**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will discover multiple perspectives; recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by identifying and analyzing text components (such as organizational structures, story elements, organizational features) and evaluating their impact on the text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to make predictions about the novel and films.

Students will have a contextual knowledge of Hawthorne's life and career.

Students will be able to use film terminology to identify those elements in a piece of film.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

What is the Custom House?

Who is our speaker?

Why is he there?

What does he says he was told to do by the ghost of Jonathan Pue, the previous surveyor?

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(10) Focus and review – Have students respond to the following quotations take from “The Custom House.” “But the past was not dead. Once in a great while, the thoughts, that had seemed so vital and so active, yet had been put to rest so quietly, revived again.” Have students write down their answers to the following questions: Why does the speaker think that the past is not dead? How do

you see the past coming back to life in this chapter? As students write, return handouts from previous lesson. When students are finished responding, have them share responses with a friend.

(5) Objectives – Explain today’s lesson. Use class objectives shown above.

(35) Teacher input – Give biographical information about Hawthorne’s life and career. This information is as follows: Born 1804 in Salem, Mass. Worked at Salem Custom House and published short stories anonymously. He married, published *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, and enjoyed success and fame in his lifetime. He moved overseas but returned before his death in 1864.

At this point, review the content of “The Custom House” chapter and allow students to ask questions. To help forward the discussion, use the questions shown above. Emphasize that Hawthorne himself is not the speaker, and that the story he tells is not real, but fiction. Ask students what the most important parts of this chapter are.

Introduce Hauser’s 1979 adaptation briefly and explain what segment students are about to watch.

Students will watch this several different times and will be looking for different things each time. Show clip from 1979 adaptation. (To locate clip, from DVD menu select “Play.” The scenes following are clips from the film. The Custom House scene is within this selection. Film time is at approximately 1:30 after selecting “Play.”) For first viewing, ask students to pay attention to detail and content, as they will be watching it several more times.

(10) Guided practice – For their second viewing, ask students to think about what the director thought the most important part of “The Custom House” chapter was. Get students to verbalize why those particular details were emphasized and not others.

(15) Independent practice – Write the terms dissolve, cut, long shot, medium shot and close up on the board and ask students if they remember these terms from yesterday. (They should look at handout if they forget.) Tell students to take out a piece of paper. Play clip again. Students must identify one example of each of these film techniques within the clip. Explain how students should write answers. (For example, for dissolve, students need to explain what the previous shot

was and what it was replaced with. Same with cut. For camera distances, students need to explain what they see in the frame.) You may need to play clip several times.

(15) Closure – Have students share their findings. When they identify camera distance, ask them why the director chose to film his subjects this way. (For example, in shot 2, a long shot of Hawthorne entering the Custom House reveals how messy the attic is, and how likely it is for something to be lost there.) Try to get student to verbalize how camera distance affects how audiences view an object or person. Collect papers. Assign homework: Read the first four chapters of *The Scarlet Letter* (approx 25 pages).

### **Assessment**

Student papers and verbal assessment

### **Materials**

Students need their copy of novel

Handout 1 from previous lesson returned.

Rick Hauser's 1979 *The Scarlet Letter* and technology for playing during class.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

### **Lesson 3 – Visualizing Hester in *The Scarlet Letter***

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

#### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will discover multiple perspectives.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

#### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to summarize the first four chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Students will be able to compare various representations of Hester Prynne's character.

#### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Who is Hester?

What has she done?

What is her punishment?

Who is Roger Chillingworth?

Who is Dimmesdale?

#### **Class Actions and Activities**

(20) Focus and review – Tell students to take out their journal and divide a page into four sections. Each section represents a chapter from the previous night's reading. Using their books, students will write the most comprehensive summary of each chapter they can. Encourage them to remember and find important details. (This is a good time to ask questions listed above.) Allow approximately eight minutes. On the board, create headings for each chapter. When students are finished, have them come up and write in their summary under one chapter heading (assign them chapters if necessary). When they have finished, ask if there are details that have been left out. If

so, add them. Tell students to copy this into their journals. The result is a comprehensive summary of important details from first four chapters.

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of the day’s lesson. Use objectives shown above. One is already completed.

(5) Teacher input – Explain the upcoming activity: they will be comparing Hester’s character in the novel to Hester’s character in a film version of *The Scarlet Letter*.

(40) Guided practice - Ask students to get in groups of three or four and create a list of adjectives or indications of character that describe Hester. They must come up with a minimum of ten adjectives, with five coming from the text (with page numbers) and five of their own. Also, five of these adjectives must *not* refer to her physical appearance.

Then play the scaffold scene from Joffe’s 1995 adaptation (located at 1:15:50 through 1:20:47). Again, have students write another list of adjectives about Hester in this scene. Again, they need ten, and five that do not refer to her physical appearance. Play the scene once, allow students time to discuss, and play the scene again as needed.

When they are finished, have students discuss what differences there were in the two Hesters. Try to focus on Hester’s pride in the film, and her reluctance to show repentance for her sin. Students may point out the actress playing Hester is Demi Moore – if they do not, point this out for them. If students are familiar with her, ask them what they know about Moore as a person and an actress. (They may know her previous roles, or her marriage to Ashton Kutcher.) If they are not, read the titles from films prior to *The Scarlet Letter: About Last Night, One Crazy Summer, We’re No Angels, Mortal Thoughts, Indecent Proposal, Disclosure*. Ask students to think about how this may affect Demi Moore as an actress.

(15) Independent practice – Individually, have students write a short paragraph in their journal about comparing Hester Prynne’s character in the novel and Hester Prynne’s character in the film. Tell

students to think specifically about her response to “sin,” and how Moore as Hester Prynne might be different.

(5) Closure – Collect journals and assign the following chapters as homework: “Hester at Her Needle,” “Pearl” and “The Governor’s Hall.”

### **Assessment**

Short paragraphs in student journals – collected at end of class.

### **Materials**

Students need their copy of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Joffe’s 1995 *The Scarlet Letter* and technology for playing in class.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**



## **Lesson 4: Screening Lesson – Film Openings**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by identifying and analyzing text components (such as organizational structures, story elements, organizational features) and evaluating their impact on the text; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to analyze film techniques to better understand film character, settings and symbols.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Frame, Camera distance – long, medium, close up

Camera angle – high, low

*Mise-en-scene*

Shot duration – long, short and Montage

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(15) Focus and review – Have film terminology quiz ready for students as they enter the room. Quiz is available attached to this lesson. Once students are finished with quizzes, collect quizzes and go over answers.

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today's lesson. Use objectives shown above.

(20) Teacher input – Explain the following activity: Students will be watching clips of different *Scarlet Letter* adaptations and taking structured notes about characters, symbols and settings. In their

journal, students will create a chart for each character or object and fill in the chart as they watch each film. Each character or object's chart will have its own page. An example of a chart for Hester is attached. (It may be a good idea to have students put their chart at the back of their journal so it does not get lost between regular assignments.) Play the same clip from Lesson 3 (Hester on scaffold, 1995) and explain details found in clip. Use examples shown in chart.

(10) Guided practice – Have students watch the clip again and take notes on the setting, Hester and Dimmesdale. After the clip is over, ask students what they wrote. Encourage them to think about how camera distance and angle and *mise-en-scene* affect these characters and objects. Students may find it helpful to have their books open so they can observe differences.

(25) Independent practice – Play the selected clips from each film and have students take notes from each film. During the clips, students are to take notes on all the characters and objects instead of focusing on just one. Explain that these charts are cumulative and they will be adding to them during other screenings, and that these charts will be used in other assignments and therefore need lots of good details. Play the following clips from each film: From Vignola's 1934: from beginning through chapter one (approximately 11:21); Hauser's 1979 on the first disc: 4:35 through 19:02.

(15) Closure – Have students point out a few details from their journals – try to get varied details from each films. Assign homework: read chapters 7 – 8.

### **Assessment**

Student notes in journal and class discussion

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals.

The teacher will need all three Scarlet Letter adaptations.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 5: Scarlet Letters**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by analyzing and evaluating the connections or relationships between and among ideas, concepts, characters and/or experiences.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will evaluate the representation of key characters from *The Scarlet Letter* and determine Hawthorne's ideas about morality.

Students will write a diary entry from the point of view of a villager watching Hester's confession.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

### **Class Actions and Activities**

- (10) Focus and review – Have students respond to the following question in their journal: Write down three words about (each) Dimmesdale, Hester and Chillingworth that represent what Hawthorne thinks about his characters.
- (5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today's lesson. Use objectives shown above.
- (10) Teacher input – Put students into groups of three or four and ask them to use their notes from yesterday's lesson about the three main characters to think about their representation. Ask them the following questions and let them discuss the answers as a group: How do the villagers react to Hester in the novel? In each movie? How does that affect you as a viewer?
- (10) Guided practice – Have students move back to their original seats and get out a fresh piece of paper. Explain to students that they will be writing a diary entry from the point of view of a villager that

is watching Hester's confession. They must choose to be a character from either the novel or any of the three movies. They must decide on one and write that at the top of the diary entry. Students are to then write a diary entry. They must: maintain the mood from their chosen setting, record their "observations" of each of the three main characters, and make a judgment of Hester and her character.

(20) Independent practice – Student will first diary entry.

(35) Closure – Ask students if anyone would like to read their diary entry. Allow several students to read, and see if you can get students who used different movies or the novel. Ask students to think about their reactions, and why they feel as they do about the characters. Their homework assignment is to type their entry and read chapter 9 – 10.

### **Assessment**

Typed diary entry

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 6: Screening Lesson – Hester and Pearl vs. the village**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to analyze film techniques to better understand film characters, settings and symbols.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Frame, camera distance – long, medium, close up

Camera angle – high, low, mise en scene

Shot duration – long, short, and montage

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(15) Focus and review – Have students respond to the following quotation: “One day, as her mother stooped over the cradle, the infant’s eyes had been caught by the glittering of the gold embroidery about the letter; and, putting up her little hand, she grasped at it, smiling, not doubtfully, but with a decided gleam that gave her face the look of a much older child. . . Again, as if her mother’s agonized gesture were meant only to make sport for her, did little Pearl look into her eyes, and smile!” Possible prompts: Why is it significant that Pearl would be transfixed by the scarlet letter? Why would Hester be unhappy about this? How does this affect Pearl’s character?

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today’s lesson. Use objectives shown above.

- (5) Teacher input – Explain the following activity: Students will be watching clips of different *Scarlet Letter* adaptations and taking structured notes about characters, symbols and settings using their charts from lesson 4.
- (10) Guided practice – Remind students how film techniques affect our viewing: if we view Chillingworth with a low angle, he may look more threatening. Also remind students that these notes will be used for other assignments.
- (40) Independent practice – Play the selected clips from each film and have students take notes: from Vignola’s 1934: 0:23:50 – 0:34:27; from Hauser’s 1979 on the first disc: 1:08:15 – 1:19:17; from Joffe’s 1:48:10 – 1:50:55. (You may find it helpful to introduce each clip. The clips from Vignola’s and Hauser’s deal with the community elders threatening to take away Pearl from Hester. The clip from Joffe’s shows Chillingworth declaring Pearl a witch.)
- (15) Closure – Have students point out a few details from their journals – try to get varied details from each film. Ask questions to encourage discussion: why would Joffe’s version show the villagers accusing Pearl of being a witch? How does this change the story? Does Hawthorne provide a basis for this story? Why would Joffe choose to include this? Assign homework: read chapters 11 – 12.

### **Assessment**

Student notes in journal

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals.

All three *Scarlet Letter* adaptations.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 7: Symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter***

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by identifying and analyzing elements of expressive environment found in text in light of purpose, audience, and context.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to identify and explain symbols in *The Scarlet Letter*.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

The scarlet letter – Where is it first mentioned? What does it mean? What do other people say about it?

What does Hester think about it? Does its meaning ever change?

Pearl – what is a pearl? What does a normal pearl symbolize? What kind of child is Pearl? What do the villagers say about her?

The rose in chapter 1 – Where does the rose grow? Why is the rose out of place? Why is it significant that a rose would grow there? What character might the rose symbolize? Why?

The meteor – When does the meteor appear? Who sees it, and why is it significant that they see it? What does it represent? What do the villagers assume it means? Why is that ironic?

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(15) Focus and review – In their journals, have students write two sentences about each of the following: the scarlet letter that Hester wears, Pearl, the rose by the prison door, and the meteor. They may use their book if needed. Have students share their sentences with a partner.

(5) Objectives – Explain lesson's purpose. Use objectives shown above.

(10) Teacher input – Explain activity: students will find out everything they can about their group’s symbol and then share their findings with the class. Divide the class into small groups, with each group representing one of the symbols (you may need to have two groups for each symbol). Each group is responsible for finding answers to the questions by their symbol based on evidence from the text and their screening notes. They must write their answers and provide page numbers for textual evidence.

(20) Guided practice – Students find answers and write them down. Each group member writes down the answers.

(35) Independent practice – Put students into new groups, made up of a student representing each symbol (one for the scarlet letter, one for Pearl, one for the rose, and one for the meteor). Students will then present their findings to their new group. The new group will take notes on each student’s findings.

Students will then go back to their own seat and write a short paragraph about each symbol and explain its meaning within *The Scarlet Letter*. (This is excellent revision for an exam!)

(5) Closure – Assign night’s homework: students will read chapters 13 – 15.

### **Assessment**

Student discussion and short paragraphs

### **Materials**

Students will need their copies of *The Scarlet Letter* and their journals.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**



## **Lesson 8: Screening Lesson – Hester and Chillingworth**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be to analyze film techniques to better understand film characters, settings and symbols.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Frame, Camera Distance – long, medium, close up

Camera angle – high low

Mise en scene

Shot duration – long, short and montage

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(15) Focus and review – Have students write an answer to the following prompt in the journal: Which character do you sympathize with the most: Chillingworth, Hester or Dimmesdale? Explain your reasoning. Students will compare their answer with a neighbor's. When students, take a poll of the class and ask for their reasoning.

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today's lesson. Use objectives shown above.

(5) Teacher input – Explain the following activity: Students will be watching clips of different *Scarlet Letter* adaptations and taking structured notes about characters, symbols and settings using their charts from lesson 4.

(10) Guided practice – Remind students how film techniques affect our viewing: if we view

Chillingworth with a low angle, he may look more threatening. Also remind students that these notes will be used for other assignments.

(40) Independent practice – Play the selected clips from each film and have students take notes: from

Vignola's 1934: 0:55:30 – 57:18; from Hauser's 1979 on the second disc 0:12:00 – 0:22:40; from Joffe's 1995: 1:25:55 – 1:30:25.

(15) Closure – Have students point out a few details from their journals – try to get varied details from

each film. Ask questions to encourage discussion: How does Chillingworth appear in the 1979 film? What does he wear? How does he act? How is this different from Chillingworth in the 1995 film? How do these differences in his appearance and behavior change the representation of his character? Which is more evil? Is he ever a sympathetic character? Assign homework: students will read chapters 16 – 17.

### **Assessment**

Student notes in journal

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals.

All three Scarlet Letter adaptations

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 9: Character Profile**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.01** Create memoirs that give an audience a sense of how the past can be significant for the present by projecting the student's voice in the work through reflective interpretation of relationships to people and events; writing for a specific audience and purpose.

**4.02** Develop thematic connections among works by using specific reference to validate connections.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to characterize a character from *The Scarlet Letter* and provide evidence.

Students will create a character profile.

Students will work in groups to present their character to the class.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Characterization – Direct and indirect

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(10) Focus and review – Write the following quotation on the board: “There can be, if I forebode aright, no power, short of the Divine mercy, to disclose, whether uttered words, or by type or emblem, the secrets that may be buried with a human heart. The heart, making itself guilty of such secrets, must perforce hold them, until the day when all hidden things shall be revealed.” – Dimmesdale. Have students answer the following questions in their journals: What does Dimmesdale mean with this statement? Do you agree? Why or why not?

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today’s lesson. Use class objectives shown above.

(10) Teacher input – Explain activity: students will work in groups to characterize either Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, Hester or Pearl using a worksheet and evidence from the films and text. They will present their character’s profile in the following lesson. Divide students into groups of four, with

each group representing a character (you may need more than one group per character). They are to use evidence from the film based on notes they took during a screening. Distribute Characterization Handout.

(5) Guided practice – Explain example for Pearl.

(50) Independent practice – Students will work in groups and fill in a minimum of six details about each character.

When they are finished, distribute the Facebook profile handout to each group. There is one per group.

Students must decide how to fill out this profile for their character. They have fifteen minutes to fill in the profile.

When students have finished their profile, each group will present to the class.

(10) Closure – Have students sign their profile and hang on classroom wall. Collect characterization handout. Assign tonight's homework: students will read chapters 18 – 19.

### **Assessment**

Characterization handout

Facebook profile handout

### **Materials**

Students will need their copies of *The Scarlet Letter* and their journals.

Characterization handout

Facebook profile handout

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 10: Screening Lesson – Scaffold and Forest**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to analyze film techniques to better understand film characters, settings and symbols.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Frame; camera distance; camera angle

Mise en scene; editing; continuity editing, cut, wipe, dissolve, iris, shot duration, montage

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(10) Focus and review – Have student respond to the following questions in their journals: Who is Pearl's father? When did you first realize who he was as you read the novel? Have students share their answer with two or three other classmates and then ask the class as a whole.

(5) Objectives - Explain the purpose of today's lesson. Use objectives shown above

(5) Teacher input - Explain the following activity: Students will be watching clips of different *Scarlet Letter* adaptations and taking structured notes about the various film conclusions using their charts from lessons 4 and 8. Some of the scenes in the clips will be from earlier sections of the novel (in particular, the scaffold scenes).

(5) Guided practice - Remind students how film techniques affect our viewing. Also remind students that these notes will be used for other assignments.

(50) Independent practice - Play selected clips from each film's conclusion and have students take notes.

Play the following clips from each film: from Vignola's 1934: 0:52:15 – 0:55:25 and 0:59:35 – 1:02:36; from Hauser's 1979 on the first disc 1:41:44 – 1:49:45 and on the second disc (Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest) 0:42:35 – 0:49:50 and 0:52:25 – 0:54:55; from Joffe's 1995 1:23:30 – 1:25:41 and 1:51:15 – 1:53:15 (Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest).

Have students discuss some of the details they wrote down. Ask questions to encourage discussion: what is the effect of the short scenes in the 1934 film? Is Dimmesdale supposed to be sympathetic? Is he sane? How do the three films depict Hester and Dimmesdale's relationships? What do we learn about Hester and Dimmesdale in the church scene – they are very close together but separated by glass. They are framed very close up so we often only see their eyes or mouths. What is the effect?

(15) Closure – In their journals, have students respond to the following question: How are Hester and Dimmesdale represented in the novel? How is this alike or different to their representations in the three different films? How do various film techniques affect this representation? Assign homework: students will read chapters 20-21.

### **Assessment**

Student notes in journal and discussion.

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals.

The teacher will need all three *Scarlet Letter* adaptations.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**

## **Lesson 11: Exploring Adaptations**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**3.01** Use language persuasively in addressing a particular issue by finding and interpreting information effectively.

**4.01** Interpret meaning for an audience by examining the functions and the effects of narrative strategies such as plot, conflict, suspense, point of view, characterization and dialogue.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will contribute to class seminar.

Students will produce a written response to analytical questioning.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

See below

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(10) Focus and review – Have students answer the following question in the journal: does watching an adaptation enhance your reading experience? Why or why not?

(5) Objectives – Explain the purpose of today’s lesson. Use objectives shown above.

(10) Teacher input – Explain to students to concept of a circle discussion. Students will arrange their desks in a large circle and participate in a seminar. The discussion will be student driven, but the teacher will mediate and ask new questions to further discussion.

(10) Guided practice - Have students write the question at the top of a page in their journal: “How does watching the adaptations affect your experience of *The Scarlet Letter*?” Encourage them to take notes and listen carefully to their peers. The notes from screening lessons will be helpful and students should refer to them to reinforce their reasoning. They may also find that referencing the text is helpful.

(40) Independent practice – Use the discussion questions provided to guide the seminar. Allow students to answer, respond and even argue. If student deviate and the line of discussion is profitably, don't stifle it for time restraints- let students think through the questions at their own pace.

(15) Closure – Have students move their desks back and then respond to the original question: How does watching the adaptations affect your experience of *The Scarlet Letter*? The teacher assigns homework: students will read the concluding chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*.

### **Assessment**

Assessment will be based on student contributions to the discussion.

### **Materials**

Students will need their journals and copies of *The Scarlet Letter*.

### **Teacher Comments/Reflections**



### Seminar Discussion Questions

Begin by having students write: How does watching the adaptations affect your experience of *The Scarlet Letter*?

Does it affect your viewing when a film is based on a novel?

Do you understand *The Scarlet Letter* better now that you have seen the adaptations?

Why/why not? What particular reasons?

How would you describe Hester Prynne in the novel?

How would you describe Hester in the films? How does she appear in the films? (Think about film techniques – how are we supposed to think of her? How does the film direct our thinking?)

How do a star's previous roles affect their role in a film?

How do the differences affect the story?

Would Hawthorne approve of the differences?

What makes a successful adaptation?

How do the adaptations affect your idea of *The Scarlet Letter*?

How does watching the adaptations affect your experience of *The Scarlet Letter*?

## **Lesson 12: Film and Novel Conclusions and Review**

Instructor: Virginia Smith

Grade Level: 11

### **NCSCOS Objectives**

**1.02** Reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will recognize how the responses of others may be different.

**1.03** Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print expressive texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus by; providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

### **Class Objectives**

Students will be able to analyze film techniques to better understand film characters, settings and symbols.

Students will be able prepared to take an exam on *The Scarlet Letter*.

### **Questions/Vocabulary**

Symbolism

Camera distance

Camera angle

Characterization

### **Class Actions and Activities**

(10) Focus and review – In their journals, have students write one of the following: a question they have about the novel *The Scarlet Letter*; a question they have about any of the adaptations and one question they would expect to see on the exam.

(5) Objectives - Explain the purpose of today's lesson. Use objectives shown above. Half of the class will be spent watching the film clips and half will be spent on revision for the exam.

- (5) Teacher input - Explain the following activity: Students will be watching clips of different *Scarlet Letter* adaptations and taking structured notes about characters, symbols and settings using their charts from lesson 4. These clips are the conclusions of the adaptations.
- (5) Guided practice - Remind students how film techniques affect our viewing. Also remind students that these notes will be used for other assignments.
- (55) Independent practice - Play the selected clips from each film and have students take notes: from Vignola's 1934: 1:04:30 – 1:09:25; from Hauser's 1979: 1:30:30 – 1:41:00; from Joffe's 1995: 2:07:30 – 2:11:08 (explain to students that in this version Chillingworth was killed in a Native American attack on the village).

Students are to ask the questions from their journal entries. Allow other students to answer questions.

Take note of questions that occur frequently, and write down useful exam questions. The exam review will take the same basic format as the seminar from Lesson 11. Students are to use notes from screenings and the novel to help answer the following questions:

What kind of world was *The Scarlet Letter* set in?

Did Hester belong in this world – the novel, and in the films?

What symbols were present in the novel, and what did they mean? In the films?

Was Hester a sympathetic character in the novel? In the films? What about Dimmesdale? What about Chillingworth? What about Pearl?

How do we know that they are supposed to be sympathetic (or not) in the films?

How do the differences in the films affect the way you think of *The Scarlet Letter*?

Are any of the adaptations “right?” Are any of them “wrong?” Why?

What does the novel say about sin? Do the films agree with that?

Encourage students to take notes on the discussion.

(10) Closure – Allow students to ask any remaining questions and explain the format of the exam.

### **Assessment**

Student notes and class discussion.

**Materials**

Students will need their journals and copies of *The Scarlet Letter*.

The teacher will need all three copies of *The Scarlet Letter* adaptations.

**Teacher Comments/Reflections**

**The Scarlet Letter Exam**

50 pts total

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Define each of the following terms:**

2pts each

1. Camera distance:

2. Long shot:

3. Medium shot:

4. Close up:

5. Continuity editing:

6. *Mise-en-scene*

**Short Answer:**

Respond to both of the following prompts in a clear, concise paragraph. You must use complete sentences and correct grammar and punctuation. 10 pts each

7. In the first chapter of *The Scarlet letter*, Hawthorne states that the first two parts of a Puritan town to be clearly established are the prison and the cemetery. What does this reveal about Puritan society?

8. Select two of the four symbols listed below and explain its role and significance to the story of *The Scarlet Letter*. You may use evidence from the novel and the films.

the rose bush

the scarlet letter

Pearl

the meteor

A)

B)

**Essay:**

Choose one of the following prompts and respond in a well organized, coherent essay on a separate piece of paper. Clearly indicate to which prompt you are responding. If you reference an adaptation, be very clear to which adaptation you are referring. (Use the director's last name as a reference.) You must use complete sentences and correct grammar and punctuation. 18 pts

A) Compare the characterization of Hester Prynne in the novel and in one of the adaptations we watched in class. Use specific examples for evidence to support your response.

B) Hawthorne's novel looks closely at "right" and "wrong". Of Hester, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, which character does Hawthorne consider the most "wrong?" Use evidence from the novel.

C) Despite other changes made to the overall narrative, the setting of *The Scarlet Letter* remained consistent in the novel and all three of the adaptations we viewed in class. How important is the setting to the story? Could *The Scarlet Letter* have happened in another time or place?

## Appendix B: The Six-Point Lesson Plan

Teacher:

Subject:

Lesson:

Date:

NCSCOS Objectives:

Focus and Review:

Objectives:

Teacher Input:

Guided Practice:

Independent Practice:

Closure: