



# BILLY ELLIOT

Years 10-12

**FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS**

A project of

**VISION KINO**  
Netzwerk für Film und  
Medienkompetenz

**BFI** Film  
Forever

**IFILM**  
DET DANSKE FILMINSTITUT

Co-funded by the  
European Union



Creative  
Europe  
MEDIA

**BILLY ELLIOT**

## BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAMME

### »FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS«

Film is a language without borders and connects people regardless of their origin, age, gender and life experience.

Migrant societies which have arisen as a result of political and social processes such as industrialisation, colonisation, mediatisation and globalisation, can utilise the power of film.

Based on this understanding, German non-profit organisation **VISION KINO**, together with the **BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE** and the **DANISH FILM INSTITUTE**, have developed this programme, consisting of eight European feature films for children and young adults, as well as three classic short films

The selection of films is supplemented by educational materials which will provide students and teachers with opportunities to discuss emotions, identity and the common exploration of European film.

Supplementary research in Denmark, England and Germany, will examine the way in which the selected films offer children and young adults a collective movie experience as well as an opportunity for intercultural learning. Joint results from the three countries will form the starting point for the dissemination of the programme in other European countries.

#### About us

“Film – A Language Without Borders” is a project of the British Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute and Vision Kino gGmbH and was developed by Mark Reid (BFI), Charlotte Giese (DFI) and Sarah Duve (Vision Kino gGmbH)

“Film – A Language Without Borders” is co-funded by the Creative Europe Media programme of the European Union

Materials published by:  
Vision Kino gGmbH  
Network for Film and Media Competence  
Sarah Duve (V.i.S.d.P.)  
Große Präsidentenstraße 9  
D-10178 Berlin  
Tel: +49 (0)30 2757 7571

Concept and Text: Laura Caterina Zimmermann  
Editorial: Elena Solte  
Editor: Lilian Rothaus, Elena Solte  
Design: Laura Caterina Zimmermann  
Picture Credits: Universal Pictures GmbH (“Billy Elliot” is available on Blu-ray & DVD)

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE**

These educational materials refer to the film BILLY ELLIOT from the programme “FILM - A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS”. They are based on the publication “Materials for Film Education in Migration Societies” that contains information on the educational approach underlying the programme, as well as general teaching ideas and reflection offerings.

This particular study guide also provides suggestions for the reflection of your lessons. For your personal notes, boxes can be found at the end of each chapter.

<b>Film Details</b>	p. 3
<b>Synopsis</b>	p. 4
<b>Before the Film</b>	p. 5
Topic Role Models	p. 5
Viewing Assignment	p. 5
<b>After the Film</b>	p. 7
Discussing the Experience	p. 7
Points of View	p. 9
Topic Strike	p. 11
<i>Worksheet Quotes</i>	p. 13
<i>Worksheet My Future</i>	p. 14

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**FILM DETAILS**



"Billy Elliot" available on Blu-ray & DVD

**BILLY ELLIOT**

RUNNING TIME: 112 MINS  
 DIRECTED BY STEPHEN DALDRY  
 WRITTEN BY LEE HALL

Film Themes	Dance, Music, Friendship, Family, Strike & Unions, Identity, Courage, Sexuality, Gender
Teaching Subjects	English, Social Studies, Politics, Music, Sports, Religion, Ethics
Countries / Year	United Kingdom, France / 2000
Grade Levels	Years 10-12
Age Recommendation	14 to 17 years
Cast	Jamie Bell, Julie Walters, Jamie Draver, Gary Lewis, Jean Heywood a.o.
Production Companies	Working Title Films, BBC Films
Distributor	Universal
Language	English original version
Format	digital, colour
Rating	15

Awards: 50 international film awards, for example: British Independent Film Awards, Oscar-nominated in the categories: Best Director, Best Supporting Actress (Julie Walters), Best Original Screenplay.



**BILLY ELLIOT****SYNOPSIS**

It is the mid-1980s in the northeast of England. Eleven-year-old Billy lives with his father, his older brother and his ailing grandmother in an area that relies heavily on mining. The coal mines are threatened by closure and the miners are on strike to prevent this (the Miners' Strike of 1984-85). Right at the forefront are Billy's brother Tony and his father Jackie. The family's financial situation is very strained. Due to the lack of income, the family has to watch every penny; at Christmas, there is not enough money to keep the house warm.

Jackie was a gifted boxer as a child and Billy is expected to get into the ring every week to train. However, he neither enjoys it, nor is he particularly good at it. One day, Mrs Wilkinson and her ballet class come to the same hall where the weekly boxing training takes place. By accident, Billy suddenly finds himself in the middle of the dance group and dances his first steps. "B-a-l-l-e-t?", his father asks in a mixture of utter incomprehension and disgust.

Jackie's whole world crumbles when he discovers that his son is doing ballet lessons instead of boxing. And even Billy is torn between his dreams of a dance career and his planned future as a miner. He struggles with the feeling of alienation when he realises that dance will take him out of his social environment. Is the decision to pursue his career a betrayal of his family or himself?

Despite many obstacles and setbacks Billy follows his heart. He finally manages to break his father's resistance and wins him over as an ally. Jackie even crosses the picket line to help Billy financially, which initially causes a fight between him and Tony. In the end, Billy conveys to his father and brother what he wants and what he does best: expressing himself through movement. Billy Elliot will not become a miner, he will go to London and his family will be very proud of him!

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**BEFORE THE FILM**

FILM THEME ROLE MODELS

**IDEAS FOR TEACHING**

We are watching a film about a boy who dances ballet. His father thinks ballet dancing is only for girls.

- What do you think? Is his father right or wrong? Why?

**Collage on Masculinity and Femininity**

Using two large posters, the students create a collage in answer to the questions of what is typically female and what is typically male. Brochures, catalogues and magazines are made available to the students. From these, they take pictures and quotes that fit the theme and stick them onto the posters.

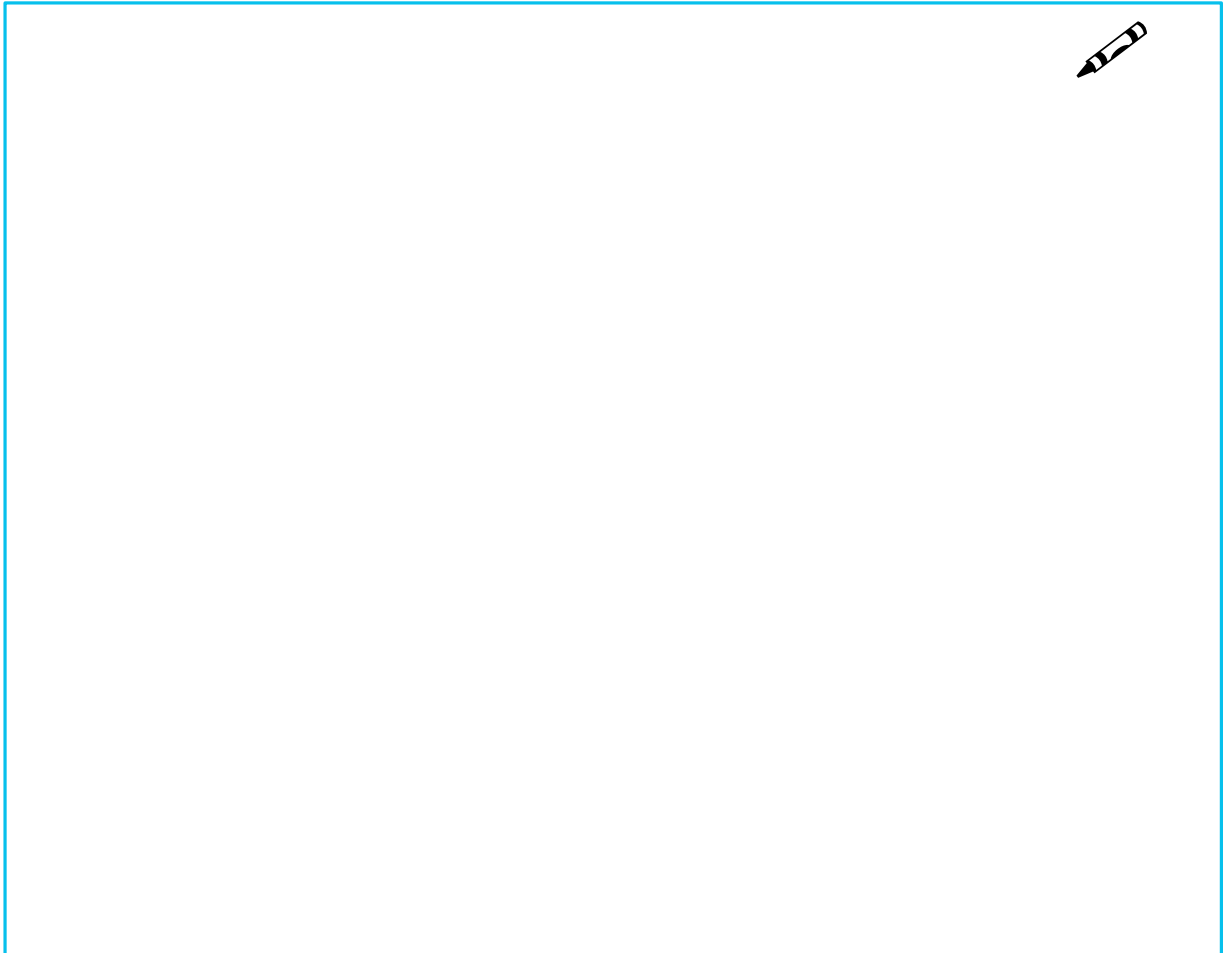
Afterwards, there will be a joint discussion about the collages. The following questions serve to stimulate the conversation:

- What is typically male?
- What is typically female?
- How do you know what is typically female and typically male?
- What pictures and quotes would best describe you?
- Are there things you would like to do but won't because you think a boy or girl cannot do them? Why is that?

## BILLY ELLIOT

### SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Have I spoken to my students about role models before? In which context was this?
- How do the students deal with role models? Do they identify with them, or not?



### VIEWING ASSIGNMENT

#### Parallel Montage Dance vs Strike

A parallel montage switches back and forth between two or more storylines. BILLY ELLIOT uses parallel montage as a stylistic element and combines scenes of the Miners' Strike with dance scenes of the protagonist.

Before the film, divide the class into two groups. Each group is asked to pay particularly close attention to either the dance scenes or the strike scenes:

- What feelings do the protagonists express in the strike and the dance scenes?

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**AFTER THE FILM**

**DISCUSSING THE EXPERIENCE**

After the film, ask the class to express their first reactions and then open up the room for questions. *BILLY ELLIOT* deals with very personal and individual topics such as sexual orientation and role models, identity and family support. Students should be provided with a safe space to discuss the film and, if necessary, to talk about their own experiences.

**IDEAS FOR TEACHING**

The following teaching suggestions can either be combined with each other or implemented individually.

**Non-verbal discussion**

The children draw an emoticon to say how they liked the movie. Then they draw the film's most important scene for them. An exhibition of the pictures can then be used as a starting point for a subsequent verbal discussion.

**Body activating evaluation**

One by one, the following adjectives are read to the children: boring, beautiful, fast, slow, loud, quiet, funny, adventurous, scary, surprising. Where the adjective matches their movie experience, they stand up. Afterwards, they sit down again.

**Film discussion**

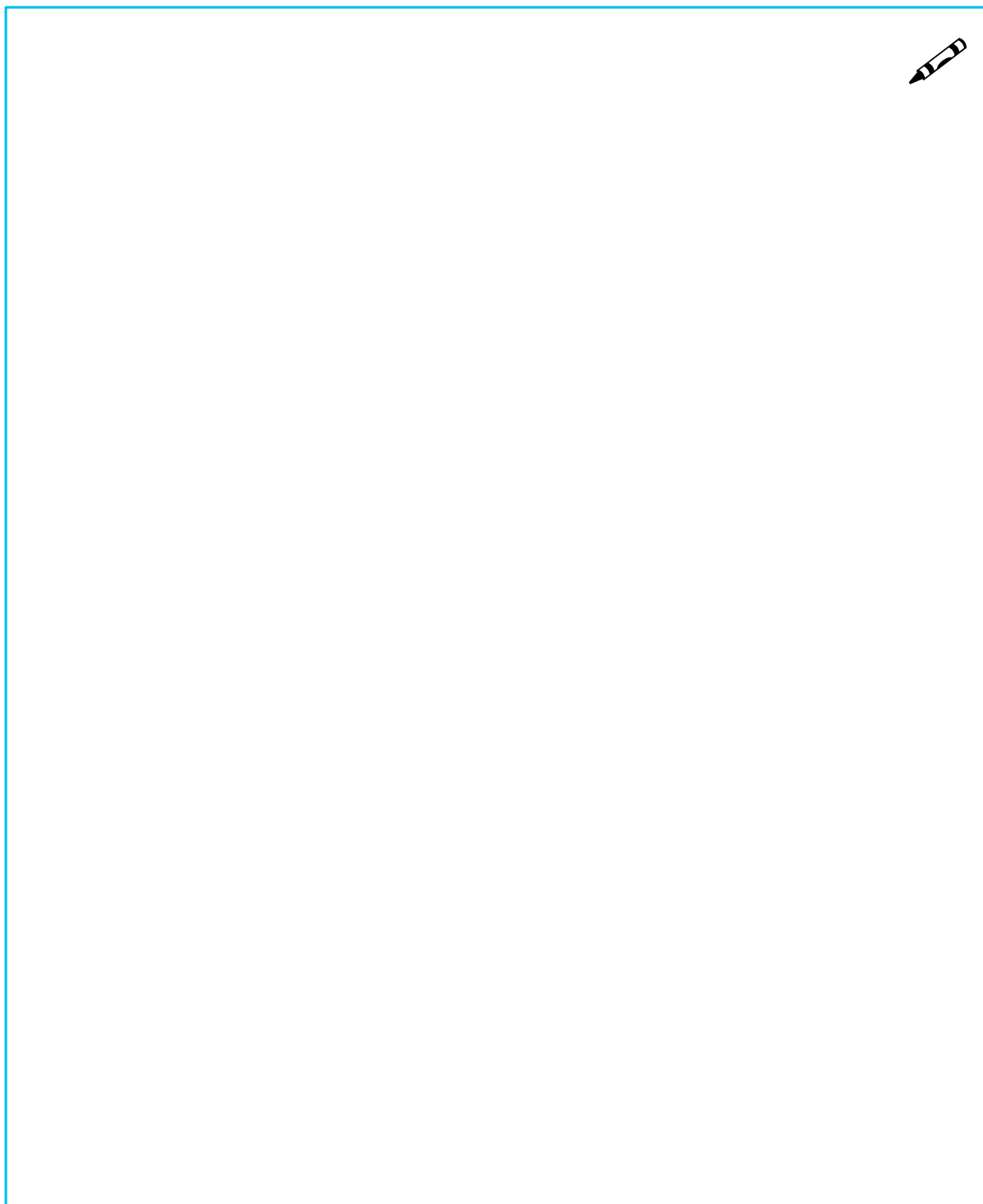
- What would you like to say about the film?
- At the cinema, how did you feel after the film?
- What feelings did you have during the film?
- Are there any scenes or themes in the movie that you would like to talk about?
- What questions remained unanswered in the film? Is there something you did not understand?



**BILLY ELLIOT**

**SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- What analogies to current social issues did I see in the film?
- How did the students respond to the film being set in the 1980s?
- Which topics in the film were the most important to the students?
- Which scenes in the film were particularly emotional for the students?



## BILLY ELLIOT

### POINTS OF VIEW

In BILLY ELLIOT several stories are told in different narrative strands. With each person in the film Billy encounters a different experience. Whilst Billy remains the main protagonist, in some scenes the perspective is changed. For example, we get an insight into Jackie and Tony's world so that we can better understand their points of view. The historical embedding of the film's events in the time of the Miners' strike creates a parallel plot regarding the fate of Billy's father and brother.

### IDEAS FOR TEACHING

The following teaching suggestions can either be combined with each other or implemented individually.

#### Guessing Game Character Analysis

Everybody chooses a character from the movie and thinks of a suitable pose for this person. In turn, the poses are presented, and the other students guess who the character is. The pose can depict the cinematic action during a certain moment, symbolise character traits or imitate typical attitudes and facial expressions.

#### Worksheet Quotations

Who said what to whom? On the "Quotations" worksheet, film characters are assigned their matching quotes. Using this method, the characters' different perspectives can be reconstructed.

#### Write an exchange of letters between Billy and his brother

Billy finally got his place at the Royal Ballet School in London. After a few weeks he writes a letter to his brother. In it he tells of his arrival and how he feels about leaving his former home. In the meantime, Billy has also received a letter from Tony, who writes how he looks back on Billy's move to London and the events that occurred before the move. Each student writes a letter - either from Billy's perspective to Tony or a letter from Tony's perspective to Billy.

The students place themselves in groups of four, together with two letters each from Billy's and Tony's perspective. Then the students exchange letters and read them.

- What ideas did you have?
- How do your letters differ?

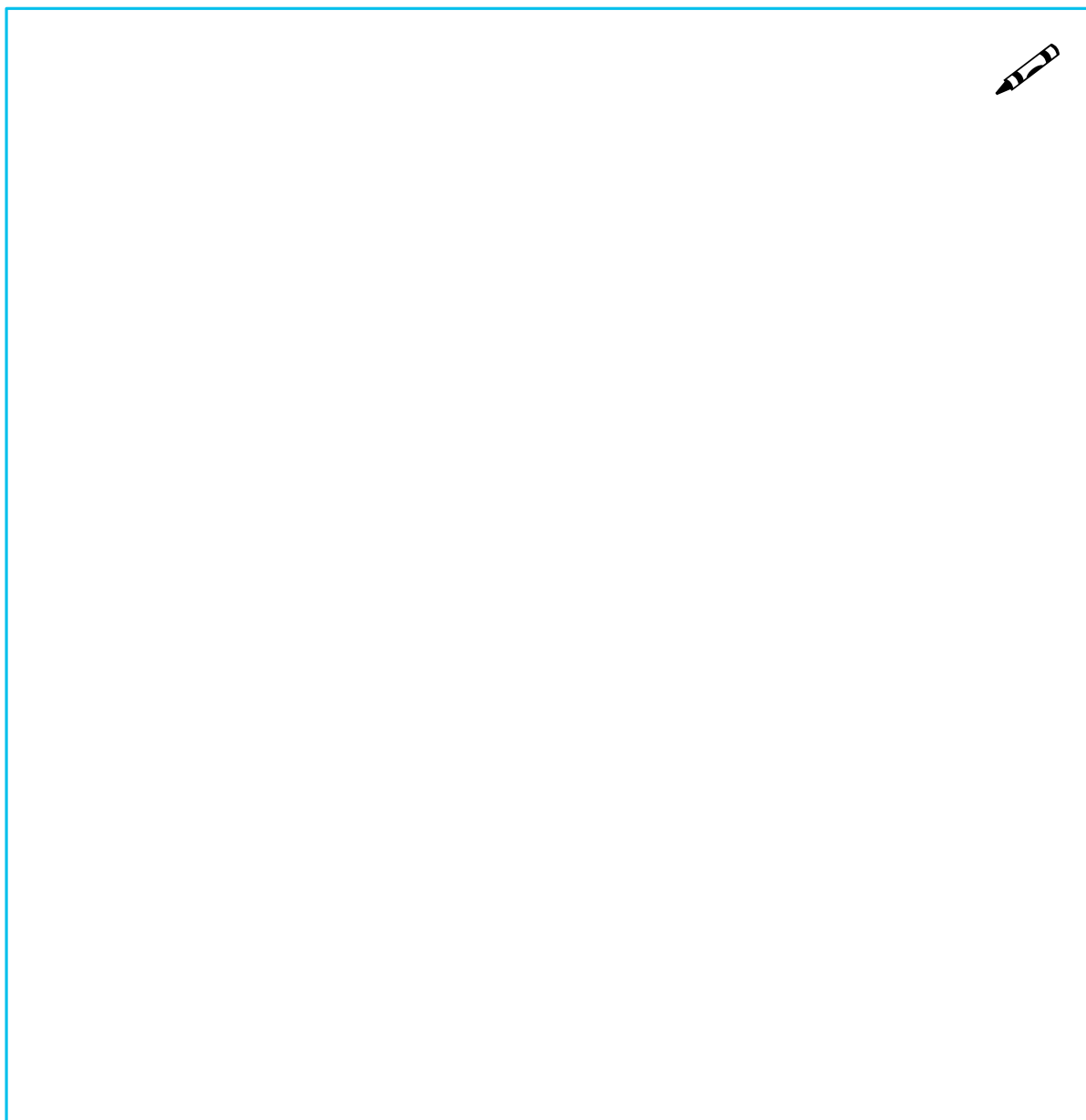
#### Billy at 25 years – Me at 25 years

The film's ending is a leap forward in time. Tony and Jackie go to London to see a dance performance with Billy. Billy is now 25 years old and a successful dancer. Using the worksheet "My Future" students create a vision of their future. Items can be written down, cut out of newspapers and pasted on or drawn. Pupils can also take photos of themselves in which they stage how they see themselves now and at the age of 25.

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- With which characters in the film could the students identify themselves?
- What was it like for the students to look at the different narrative strands?
- Which narrative thread gained most attention from the students?
- How did the students who were placed in small groups work together?



## BILLY ELLIOT

### TOPIC: STRIKE

Almost all the men in the town where Billy lives work as miners. The work in the mines is an important part of their identity, not only because they are financially dependent on it to feed their families.

#### IDEAS FOR TEACHING

The following teaching suggestions can either be combined with each other or implemented individually.

##### **Discussion on the subject of strikes**

Presumably students will possess very different prior knowledge of strikes. For example, in some countries strikes are an everyday, political means of defending oneself against injustice. In other countries, there is no strike tradition. A conversation can help ensure students are on an equal footing and support those who have problems understanding the concept of strike. The following questions serve to stimulate the conversation.

- What is a strike?
- In what context have you heard of a strike?
- What do you need to be able to strike? Can you think of people who are treated unfairly but cannot strike?
- For what or against what would you strike?
- What would justify a strike? What would not justify a strike?

##### **Research on the subjects of coal and energy** (for younger students)

Billy's family not only lacks the money his brother and father need to forego during the strike. At times they also lack coal for heating. After the students have researched the following three questions, there will be a short discussion on coal and energy. It should become clear what significance coal played in people's lives back in the 1980s and what role it still plays today.

- What is coal used for?
- How is coal produced?
- How is energy created in the UK today?

##### **Research "Miners' Strike"** (for older students)

Internet research on the Miners' strike will illustrate the background. The questions below can be given to the students to aid orientation during their research. Following the research, the students will put together their findings in a group session.

- Who went on strike?

## BILLY ELLIOT

- Why were they striking?
- How long did the strike last?
- What were the repercussions of the strike?

### Parallel Montage Dance vs Strike

There will be a joint discussion about the stylistic element of parallel montage. (A parallel montage switches back and forth between two or more storylines.) To begin with, students will deduce the meaning of the term.

- What is the meaning of parallel?
- What is a montage?

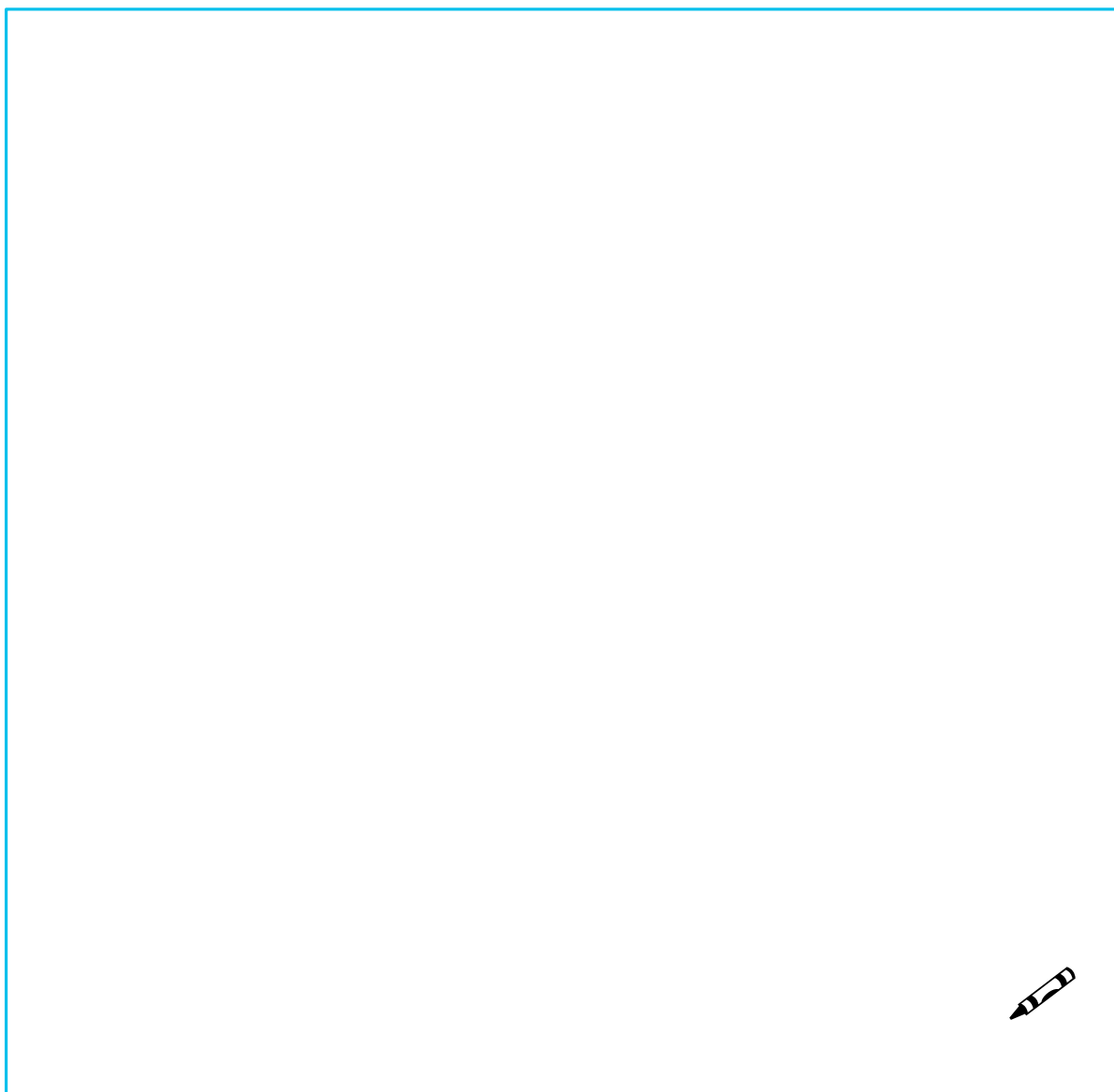
Remind the class that they were in groups that focused on strike scenes or dance scenes. Ask members of the strike scene observers to partner with members of the dance scene observers to discuss the following questions in groups of two:

- What feelings did the strike scenes trigger in us?
- What feelings did the dance scenes trigger in us?
- What do the scenes have in common?
- Why do the scenes fit together well?
- Why do the scenes not fit together well?
- Why was the parallel montage chosen here?

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- How much prior knowledge do the students have on the subjects of strike and unions?
- What experience and backgrounds shaped the students' opinions when discussing work and strike?





**BILLY ELLIOT**

**WORKSHEET**

QUOTES

Mrs  
Wilkinson

Father  
Jackie

Brother  
Tony

Billy

Michael

"Mum would have let us."

"I know this might be hard for you but today  
Billy missed a very important audition."

"I feel like a right sissy."

"Lads do football or boxing or wrestling,  
not frigging ballet."

"Do you think being a ballet dancer would be better than being a miner?"

"Can't you be a ballet dancer here?"

"I'm busting my arse for those fifty pence."

"What've we got to offer that Billy? He might be a f\*\*ing genius, for all we know?"

"This is when you go out and find life. And all those other things."

"Do you wanna try?  
You can try one of my mum's (dresses)."

"You're the same as everybody else.  
All you want is to tell me what to do."

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

"What are you trying to do, make him a scab for the rest of his life?"

Mrs  
Wilkinson

Father  
Jackie

Brother  
Tony

Billy

Michael

**BILLY ELLIOT**

**WORKSHEET**

MY FUTURE

ME now:

ME at 25: