



EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES (1931)

Ages 7-11

FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS

A project of

VISION KINO
Netzwerk für Film und
Medienkompetenz

BFI Film
Forever

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EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

THE PROGRAMME »FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS«

Film is a language without borders; it has the power to connect people regardless of their origin, age, gender and life experience.

Because contemporary society has been shaped by political and social processes such as industrialisation, colonisation, mediatisation and globalisation, we believe we can use film as part of conversations about identity, community, and belonging.

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.

In addition, researchers in Denmark, England and Germany will examine the way in which the selected films offer children and young adults a collective film watching 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)

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EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

These educational materials refer to the film EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES (1931) 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.

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EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

FILM DETAILS



EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES (1931)

DURATION: 75 MINS

DIRECTED BY: GERHARD LAMPRECHT

WRITTEN BY: BILLY WILDER

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY ERICH KÄSTNER

Film Themes

Crime Story, Theft, Friendship, Big City, Family, Solidarity, Adults and Children, Justice

Teaching Subjects

Citizenship, Religion, Arts, General Studies, Social Studies, History

Country / Year

Germany / 1931

Grade Levels

Years 3-6

Age Recommendation

7- to 11-year-olds

Cast

Rolf Wenkhaus, Fritz Rasp, Käthe Haack, Olga Engl, Rudolf Bierbrach, Inge Landgut, Hans Schaufuß, Hans Albrecht Löhr

Production Company

UFA GmbH

Distributor

MFA+ FilmDistribution e.K.

Language

German original version, English subtitles

Format

black and white

Rating

PG – Parental Guidance

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

SYNOPSIS

Emil Tischbein is spending the summer holidays with his grandmother in Berlin. It suits him quite well to leave his small town for a few weeks as he fears that he is wanted by the local constable for a prank he played with his friends. Apart from that he likes living there and supports his single mother whenever he can, as the two of them are very close.

For his trip to Berlin Emil is given 140 Reichsmarks to hand to his grandmother. On the train, Emil sits in the same compartment as a dubious man called Mr. Grundeis, who scares Emil so much that he secures his money with a pin in his inside pocket.

Mr. Grundeis is indeed after Emil's money and supplies him with a poisoned sweet. Emil falls into a deep sleep and when he wakes up, both the money and Mr. Grundeis have disappeared. As Emil looks out the window of the train, he realises that he is already in Berlin. He also spots Mr. Grundeis, who is hurrying away from the platform.

Without hesitation, Emil gets off at Zoo station, even though he is meant to be picked up by his grandmother and his cousin Pony Hütchen at Friedrichstraße station. He follows Mr. Grundeis through the big city which proves to be quite challenging for a small town boy like Emil. Luckily, he meets "Gustav with the horn" and his gang and the children start their hunt, code-named "Password Emil". They inform Emil's grandmother of what has happened and take Pony Hütchen with them in search of the stolen money.

The thief is convicted when he tries to exchange Emil's one-hundred-mark note in a bank. Because of the pinholes in the notes, the police believe Emil and the other children. Since Mr. Grundeis is an internationally wanted bank robber, Emil receives a reward of 1000 Reichsmarks and is celebrated as a hero on his return to his hometown.

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES celebrates the power of friendship and solidarity in an infectious manner. Not many other children's books were made into films as often as Erich Kästner's story about a Berlin children's gang that brings down a wanted pickpocket without the help of adults. Gerhard Lamprecht was the first director to do so in 1931. The straightforwardness and artistic consistency made this film a worldwide success with children and adults more than 80 years ago - and to this day it continues to thrill audiences. Film classics like this not only tell exciting stories, but through their visuals and design are also contemporary witnesses of a special kind. It is not just an exciting story about morality and justice. The film is also a snapshot of life in Berlin on the eve of the National Socialists' seizure of power.

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BEFORE THE FILM

GENRE CRIME FILM

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES is a crime film. Certain characteristics are connected with this genre that raise certain expectations.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Gathering Film Genres

The children talk about different film genres. Each names their favourite film and assigns it to a genre. Alternatively, they can just list genres they know.

Genre Crime Film

- What is typical for a crime film?
- Which crime films and crime series do you know?
- What feelings are triggered in the audience by crime films?
- Remember a crime film you have watched: Can you think of any effects that made the film exciting?

Reflecting on the Title

The children are presented the film title EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES.

- What do detectives do?
- Have you ever played detective yourself? What do you do when you play detective?

In small groups of 3-4 students, the children develop their own short story called "Emil and the Detectives".

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES: A CLASSIC

Many of the children might already know EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES, either as a book or a film.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

From Book to Film

Many films that children know are based on books. From a book of their choice the children can select a short scene and stage it as a play, to find out what to pay attention to when turning a piece of writing into a movie or a play.

- What can be difficult when turning a book into a play?
- What do you have to pay attention to when turning a book into a film?
- What can be expressed better in books?
- What can be expressed better in films?

Research on Erich Kästner

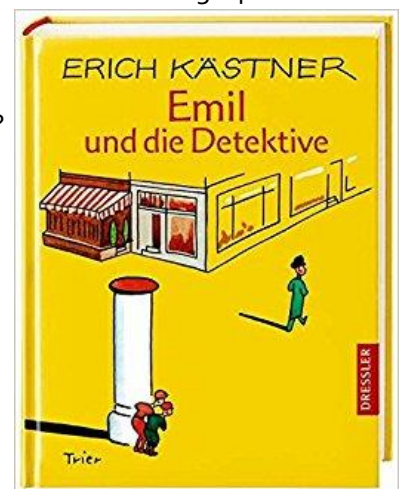
- When did Erich Kästner live?
- What other books did Erich Kästner write?
- Find a famous quote by Erich Kästner

1931 - The Year the Film was Made

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES was made almost 90 years ago. The children can be told that in 1931 films were made quite differently (rolls of film and editing techniques using scissors, black-and-white shots...). The political situation in Germany during the 1930s may also be an introduction to the topic (Weimar Republic, the eve of the National Socialists' seizure of power, separation of boys and girls in schools, authoritarian education by parents and teachers).

Advertising a Film

- Nowadays, films are advertised in many different ways. Trailers are shown in cinemas, on television and the internet, film posters are displayed all over town and there are websites where you can find information about films. Sometimes there is additional film merchandise that can be purchased, such as t-shirts or mugs. In 1931 film posters were hung up in the cinemas as an announcement. In addition, pictures of film scenes were put up alongside the posters. Both are still done today, however, back then these were the only advertising materials that existed. Together, we will look at the following original advertising images from 1931: What do you notice about the pictures?
- How can you tell that the pictures are from 1931?
- What can you see in the pictures?



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- What facial expression does the man have?



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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- How many children knew of EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES?
- What historical knowledge do the children have of the Weimar Republic or the time before the Second World War?
- What prior knowledge do the children have of film production?
- What expectations do the children have of the film?



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AFTER THE FILM

DISCUSSING THE EXPERIENCE

The following teaching suggestions can either be combined with each other or implemented individually to gather and express first impressions.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

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.

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?

Group Discussion on Film as Time Travel

- How did you realise that the film is set in the past?
- What didn't they have back then that they have now?
- What did they have back then that no longer exists today?
- What did you notice about the clothes and hairstyles of the characters in the film?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- How did the students like the film?
- Which film topics did the students find most interesting?
- Have the children watched a black and white film before?



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TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY FILMS

Nowadays, when a crime film is produced, the filmmakers have other possibilities than they did back then. However, many of the techniques used in EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES can still be found in today's crime films. For example, in EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES a lot of suspense is created for the audience through editing and music.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Suspense in the Film

Much of the suspense in EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES is created by the parallel presentation of simultaneously occurring events. This is called parallel montage. We see what Mr. Grundeis experiences; we see "Little Tuesday" waiting by the telephone; we see the grandmother waiting for Emil and worrying, and we see how Emil, Gustav and the others are starting off their search together, splitting into smaller groups later. The film's music adds to the suspense of the story.

- Which film scenes were particularly exciting?
- Can you tell what made these scenes so exciting for you? (Editing, music, dialogue, special effects...)

Emil's Nightmare

The techniques that were used to make Emil's nightmare on the train particularly scary can be examined by students, either in small groups of 3-4 or individually, using the film stills on the worksheet "Emil's Dream". Afterwards the whole class will discuss the following:

- How could you portray a nightmare using the film technology of today?
- What special effects do you know from contemporary films? What effects did they most probably not have in the old days?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Did the children like the style of the film?
- Was it new for the children to watch a film from the 1930s?



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THE FILM'S MESSAGE, ROLE MODELS, POINTS OF VIEW

The relationships between adults and children are constantly changing. In the film it becomes clear that Emil has a lot of respect for authorities and is almost afraid of the local constable. The children manage to get wanted criminal Mr. Grundeis convicted and thus impress the adults. In the film there is only one female detective, Emil's cousin Pony Hütchen. Other girls are not visible in the film.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Topic Solidarity

Discuss the film's message based on the following film still:



- What can you see in the picture?
- What happens immediately afterwards in the film?
- How does Emil manage to catch the thief?
- Could Emil have managed to catch the thief without his new friends?

In small groups of 3 to 4 students, the children think about situations they have experienced, in which they have only managed to do something because they were working together with others.

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The Butterfly

- Why does Emil give his cousin a butterfly?
- Why is Emil angry when Gustav gives his cousin Pony Hütchen a box full of butterflies?

Girls and Boys

- Why is there only one girl in the search party?
- Can you think of other crime stories in which there are also girls solving crimes?

Protagonist Emil

Emil's characteristics are gathered in the worksheet.

Then all characteristics are compiled by the class. For each characteristic the children provide an example from the film.

Introduction of Mr. Grundeis

At the beginning of the film, Emil rides alone on a train and watches the other people in his compartment. He pets a passenger's geese and helps a man who lights a cigarette. Mr. Grundeis, who will later steal Emil's money, is hiding behind his newspaper.

- When does Mr. Grundeis first become aware of Emil and looks at him?
- What is your first impression of Mr. Grundeis?

Mr. Grundeis tells Emil an incredulous story:

"In Berlin for the first time? You will be amazed. There are houses that are 100 storeys high (...) On foot it takes you three months to go up them. So you take the lift instead. In every lift there is a kitchen so you don't starve on the way up. If you want to get to a different part of Berlin all you have to do is go to a post office. They put you in a pipe there and shoot you where you need to be. If you don't have any money in Berlin you go to a bank, leave your brain as a deposit and receive a thousand Marks in return. Because a person can live without a brain for two days. And you will only get it back when you pay twelve hundred Marks instead of a thousand."

- Why is Mr. Grundeis telling Emil this story?
- How do the other passengers react to his story?

Retell the train ride from the perspective of Mr. Grundeis.

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Which of the topics mentioned in the film are similar to the children's own living environments?
- How do the children perceive Emil? How do they feel about his pranks at the beginning of the film? How do they value his loyalty towards his mother?
- How did girls feel about the story? Did they miss some female role models?



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THE CITY IN THE FILM

When Emil arrives in Berlin, he has no time to be too overwhelmed. Because he has a mission, he has to find his way around quickly.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Reading a city map

The children form small groups of four people. A city map is given to each of the groups. The children look for places on the map. Each child draws his or her way to school with a coloured pencil. Who has the longest route?

- Look up the following locations on the map: the school, the local supermarket, the home of your best friend

Afterwards, the task is evaluated by the whole group in a discussion round:

- What does our city/our town look like? Which characteristics describe our city?
- How is Berlin represented in the film? Which characteristics describe Berlin?
- What could our city/our town have looked like in 1930? What has changed since then?

City walk

Preliminary discussion before the city walk: A still from the film can be a reminder of how Berlin is portrayed in the film.



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During a walk the children photograph their city/town. They can take pictures in black and white as well as in colour to try out how the effect of a picture changes with colours. What places of interest are there? What is characteristic for the town? Then a poster is made with the pictures.

SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Do the children perceive our city/town differently from me?
- Are the children having trouble finding their way around on a map?
- What impression of 1930s Berlin do the children have?



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WORKSHEET

EMIL'S DREAM

Label the pictures.

- What is real in the picture?
- What is a visual effect?
- How does the picture work?







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WORKSHEET

PROTAGONIST EMIL

Write some characteristics around the picture that fit Emil.

