



SING STREET

Year 8+

FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS

A project of



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European Union



Creative
Europe
MEDIA

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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 didactic 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 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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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

These educational materials refer to the film SING STREET 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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FILM DETAILS



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DURATION: 106 MINS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: JOHN CARNEY

Film Themes	Music, School Band, Being in Love, Youth Cultures, Fashion, The 1980s, Friendship, Separation, School, Rebellion
Teaching Subjects	Music, English, Media Studies, Social Studies, Geography
Countries / Year	Ireland, United Kingdom, USA / 2016
Grade Levels	Year 8 and above
Age Recommendation	13-year-olds and above
Cast	Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, Lucy Boynton, Jack Reynor, Maria Doyle Kennedy, Aiden Gillen, Kelly Thornton, Ben Carolan, Mark McKenna, Percy Chamburuka, Conor Hamilton, Karl Rice a.o.
Production Companies	FilmNation Entertainment, Cosmos Film, Palm Star Media
Distributor	StudioCanal
Language	English original version
Format	digital, colour
Rating	PG – Parental Guidance

Festivals: Sundance Film Festival 2016; Dublin Film Festival 2016; South by Southwest Film Festival 2016; Nashville Film Festival 2016

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SYNOPSIS

Conor's parents are broke and about to separate. But big changes are not only happening in Conor's family. It is 1985 and all over Dublin there is a spirit of optimism: Young people with high hopes for their future are drawn to London, where they hope to find a more exciting life and better career prospects than on the island. Even Raphina, who smokes on the steps outside Conor's new school every day, wants to go there with her older boyfriend.

Conor is immediately taken with the hip girl. To attract her attention, he pretends to be in a band that needs Raphina for a video shoot. However, the problem is that he doesn't play an instrument and that he doesn't have any friends in the new school who could become band members. So he rounds up a handful of other outsiders from the school and writes his first song. Luckily, Conor has a big brother, Brendan, who is well versed in music and does not hold back with criticism. Every night Brendan introduces him to the records of new bands: Duran Duran, The Cure, Depeche Mode, who are soon imitated by Conor and his band "Sing Street", named after the road where his new school is located.

From now on, Conor calls himself a futurist. With a recording of their first song on tape, he once again tries his luck with Raphina. Amazingly, she likes the music and also turns up for the video shoot. She quickly realises that this band is anything but professional, but she somehow likes them, and she somehow likes Conor too. However, her plan to travel to London with her boyfriend remains, even though Conor tries his best to stop her.

One day, Raphina is gone. But the music of "Sing Street" is getting better and better and the band project is proving to be great fun for the boys. Conor develops ambition and self-esteem and stands up to Barry, the school bully, and to the authoritarian Headmaster. Conor's parents split up and sell the house he grew up in. Then suddenly Raphina is back, who was dumped by her boyfriend in London.

The film ends in a grand finale: "Sing Street" have their first concert in the school hall, where they openly criticise the authoritarian Headmaster with a song. After the concert, Conor and Raphina set off for London in a little boat that used to belong to Conor's grandfather.

The film is a tribute to the music of the 1980s and youth dreams. The songs of the fictional band "Sing Street" are almost always played in full length in the film and were written by the director himself.

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BEFORE THE FILM

SETTING THE MOOD

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Expectations of the Film

Looking at the movie still students will talk about the expectations they have of the film.



- Who can you see in the picture and what are they doing?
- How are people dressed? Roughly in which decade would you place people based on their attire?
- What could the film be about?
- What does the title possibly tell us in advance about the film?
- What other films do you know where music plays a big part?

Music Research Assignment

Conor, the protagonist of the film SING STREET, forms a band. Following his brother's advice he starts listening to more and more musical styles and bands of the 1980s.

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Based on the following questions students research the music of the 1980s, regardless of genre or origin.

- Which bands were popular in the 1980s?
- What was new about the music of the 1980s? Which instruments were new?
- Which musical genres emerged at the time?
- What bands or musicians are influenced by the music of the 1980s?

Each student picks a song from a band of that era and introduces it to the others.

- What band is the song by?
- What is the song about?
- Which musical genre does the song belong to?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

- What expectations do students have of the film?
- Are students interested in the music of the 1980s?



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AFTER THE FILM

FIRST REACTIONS

To begin with, the film is looked at as a complete work. Students can share their first impressions of the film and express their opinion. Subsequent tasks will be more about analysing and looking at individual aspects of the film.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

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

Film Discussion

- What would you like to say about the film?
- What questions remained unanswered in the film? Is there something you did not understand?
- Did you like the film? Why?

Acting Out Key Scenes

In small groups of about 4 students a key scene from the film is reenacted. The scene is selected by the group, rehearsed and then presented to the group. Together, the scenes are matched with the story:

- Is the scene from the beginning, the middle or the end of the movie?
- Find a caption for the scene that describes what it is mainly about.
- What made you choose this particular scene?

Message of the Film

Every film has a message or several messages. What do you think the filmmaker wants to tell us with this film?

As part of the School Cinema Weeks during Spring 2018, there will be some supplemental research on didactic cinema. We therefore would appreciate it, if you would send us the **anonymous results of the film discussion**:

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REFELCTIONS 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?
- Could the students relate to the 1980s?
- What did the students like about the film and what did they not like about the film?



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PROTAGONIST CONOR AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS

Conor is the main protagonist in SING STREET. Based on his relationships and dealings with others in the film we learn a lot about his attitudes towards life and people. The band project makes Conor more self-confident and courageous, he defends himself against injustice and takes his life into his own hands.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

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

Character Analysis

The following quotes highlight Brendan's and Conor's roles in the film and their personalities. The quotes can be discussed in a large group, in small groups or as couples.

Brother Brendan

He not only introduces him to the most important bands and discusses his lyrics with him, he also distracts Conor from their parents' separation and encourages him to leave Ireland.

"You're the youngest. You get to follow the path that I macheted through the jungle that is our mad family. (...) You just moved in my jetstream."

"But once, I was a fucking jet engine."

"Rock'n' Roll is a risk."

"My brother says all the great artists had to get off this island."

Discussion Questions based on the Quotes:

- In which context does Brendan say this sentence? What does Brendan mean?
- Does this song match his personality well or does it not?

Protagonist Conor

Conor says in the film: *"I'm a futurist. Like, no nostalgia."*

Analyse the concepts of futurism and nostalgia. Are they opposites?

- What behaviour would be typical for a futurist or for a nostalgist?
- What type of music does Conor consider futuristic?
- What type of music would be considered futuristic today?

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Conor's Clothing Style

Based on the movie still students will discuss the meaning of Conor's style changes.



- How do you explain Conor's frequent style changes?
- What does he want to achieve with it?
- What does this behaviour say about his personality?

Power and Powerlessness

Barry, Raphina and the Headmaster significantly influence Conor's feelings and the characters radiate the power they have over his feelings and behaviour.

However, the power balance is reversed during the course of the film.

Conor and Raphina

- What does Conor like about Raphina? How can we tell that he is infatuated?
- When and why does Raphina begin to develop an interest in Conor?
- Do you think that Raphina is seriously in love with Conor or does she only play with him? Which scenes indicate infatuation and which indicate play?

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Conor and Barry

- How does Conor deal with Barry's behaviour at the beginning of the film? What do you think about the way he deals with it?
- How does the film explain why Barry is so violent and spiteful?
- When is the balance of power reversed? How does Conor manage to defend himself against Barry?
- What does Conor do to reconcile with Barry?

Conor and the Headmaster

- How does Conor deal with the Headmaster's authoritarian behaviour at the beginning of the film?
- When is the balance of power reversed? How does Conor manage to defend himself against the Headmaster's unjust behaviour?

Open Ending

First scene of the film: Conor watches on the news that many young Irish people are leaving for London to start a new life and seek personal fulfilment. The last scene of the film shows Conor leaving for London in his grandfather's boat.

- What could Conor be thinking at this moment?
- How might Conor imagine the course of his future life at this moment?
- How do you think Conor's and Raphina's life might carry on in reality?
- Many years have passed since the days the movie was set in. What do you think Conor's life might look like today?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- How do the students imagine Conor's life in London? Does it reflect desires for their personal future?
- With which characters in the film could the students particularly identify themselves?
- How did the students who were placed in small groups work together?



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MUSIC AS A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

This task block can tie in with the discussions about setting the mood as well as the music research assignment. SING STREET's song lyrics were written by director John Carney specially for the film. Therefore, the film's storyline is reflected in the texts: Conor's infatuation, the lack of understanding by unreflective authorities and a lust for life.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

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

Analysing Song Lyrics

The following worksheets contain the lyrics for the songs "Drive it like you stole it" and "Brown Shoes". In small groups the lyrics are analysed using the questions on the worksheets. Before the students commence they look up any unknown words and then interpret the lyrics together.

Shooting a Music Video

When Conor watches "Top of the Pops" with his brother and their mother it is evident that music videos are something new and special. Their father proclaims: "If that is the future we're all screwed." Nowadays music videos are an established part of popular culture. And nowadays many pop songs are being reinterpreted by amateurs and fans and put on the internet.

In small groups of 4-5, students produce their own music video with their smart phones. For this, they choose a song that suits their current life situation.

The students start by drawing a storyboard, just like Conor did for his first video.



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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- How familiar are the students with film production? Do they also know about editing and composition?
- What was more difficult for the students, the technical implementation of the music video or developing a story?



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WORKSHEET

SONG LYRICS "BROWN SHOES"

1. What is the song about and what is its message?
2. Who does Conor criticise in this song?
3. What could Conor have meant with the line "You're stuck in the past - I'm writing the future"?
4. How does Conor get his revenge on the Headmaster?
5. What could the brown shoes be a symbol of?

Brown Shoes

Who the hell are you to tell me what to do?
 You wear a dress and tell me not to wear brown shoes
 You think you're man enough to wash the makeup off my face right now?
 But don't you know the bigger that they are the harder they fall?

And the boot's on the other foot now
 Buckle up, we're taking you down
 See, your curtain's falling, so take your bow

And who the hell is he to tell me who to be?
 If he wants me dancing, he can watch on MTV
 You try to shut me up
 I'll turn the volume up
 And drown you out
 But don't you know the bigger that they are the harder they fall?

Yeah, the boot's on the other foot now
 Buckle up, we're taking you down
 See, your curtain's falling, so take your bow

Cause you had your time in the sun
 And it's no use banging your drum
 Now the boot's on the other foot, take your bow

What's gonna define the rest of your life?
 Start facing the truth
 You're stuck in a lie
 Sharp end of your knife is pointing at you
 Your up will be down
 Just hanging around in gravity boots
 You're stuck in the past
 I'm writing the future

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Yeah, the boot's on the other foot now
Buckle up, we're taking you down
And your mask is slipping, so take your bow

Yeah, you had your time in the sun
Does it hurt when you're kicking someone?
Cause the boot's on the other foot
Boot's on the other foot
Boot's on the other foot now
Yeah, take your bow

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WORKSHEET

SONG LYRICS “DRIVE IT LIKE YOU STOLE IT”

1. What is the song about and what is its message?
2. What could be the meaning of the saying “Drive it like you stole it”?
3. Which songs do you know that have a similar message?
4. How is this song well-suited to Conor and the other band members?
5. Which scenes in the movie fit this song?
6. Does this song relate to anything in your personal life?

Drive it like you stole it

You just can't stand the way that I walked out from the wreckage
 Can't understand the way that I turned myself around
 I tried to terminate this war
 With you
 But you won't let it go
 You keep coming back for more

Freedom
 I'm takin' it back
 I'm outta here, no turnin' back
 In a baby blue Cadillac
 Just when I was stallin'
 I heard an angel callin'

This is your life
 You can go anywhere
 You gotta grab the wheel and own it
 And drive it like you stole it
 Roll it
 This is your life
 You can be anything
 You gotta learn to rock and roll it
 You gotta put the pedal down
 And drive it like you stole it
 And drive it like you stole it

We get stuck in the dirt
 And we can't see where we're going
 We face all kinds of hurt
 And the friction slows us down
 But I won't be waiting here for the world to win me gold
 And I'll leave your dust behind me

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Stranded in the road

Freedom

I'm takin' it back

Attitude

I'm givin' it back

In a baby blue Cadillac

Just when I was stallin'

I heard an angel callin'

This is your life

You can go anywhere

You gotta grab the wheel and own it

You gotta put the pedal down

And drive it like you stole it

This is your life

You can go anywhere

You gotta grab the wheel and own it

And drive it like you stole it

Roll it

This is your life

You can be anything

You gotta learn to rock and roll it

You gotta put the pedal down

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-oo-hoo)

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-oo-hoo)

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-oo-hoo)

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-oo-hoo)