Year 8 Film Study

Hugo
Analysing the Film Poster

Film posters are advertisements. The purpose of a poster is to "sell" the film—to make you want to see it. Study the poster on the front page carefully.

1. Describe the **overall design** of the poster – position of the **title**, the type of **font** and the **visual**.

2. A **tag line** is a catchy and memorable phrase or sentence on a film poster. What is the tag line and what does it suggest about the film?

3. What are the main **colours** used in the poster? Why?

4. Who is the **target audience**? Explain your choice.
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**Lighting**
- Where are characters lit from – in front; behind; above; below. [expressive/low key lighting; realism/high key lighting; side lighting]
- Light or dark?
- Colour symbolism
- Colour palate?

**Elements to analyse in films**

**Camera work**
- Type of shot [extreme long shot; long shot; full shot; medium/mid-shot; close up; extreme close up]
- Angle of the shot – straight on; high angle/elevated; low angle; overshot/overhead shot; eye level shot; undershot
- Focus [shallow – you can only see things close to the camera; deep – you can see things far from the camera as well]
- Point of view

**Editing**
- Speed of cut
- Cut
- Fade
- Wipe
- Dissolve
- Jump cut
- Deliberate separation or distancing

**Sound**
- Music [sound track]
- Sound effects and distortion
- Diegetic sound [Sound where you see on screen where it is coming from]
- Non-diegetic sound [when you can’t see on screen where it is coming from, i.e. voiceovers]

**Mise-en-scène**
- Set
- Art Direction
- Props
- Hair and Makeup
- Actors’ decisions: movements, expressions and vocal inflections
- Shot composition.
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**Other Advertising Posters**

Here are some other posters to advertise the film *Hugo*.

What do these images tell us about the film?

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3
Summary of the Film

Young orphan, Hugo Cabret (Asa Butterfield), lives in the walls of an early 1930s Paris train station. Here, he secretly winds the clocks, evades the clutches of the station master (Sacha Baron Cohen), and devotes himself to fixing a mysterious automaton salvaged by his late father (Jude Law). Stealing clockwork parts from the station’s little toy booth, he incurs the wrath of the shop’s owner, embittered Papa Georges (Ben Kingsley).

When he ends up befriending the old man’s adoptive daughter Isabelle (Chloë Grace Moretz), however, Hugo begins to uncover the mystery of Georges’ past. What is it that he keeps hidden in his wardrobe? And why does Isabelle carry a key which fits Hugo’s automaton?

Background Information

Martin Scorsese (born 1942) is an American film director, screenwriter, producer, actor, and film historian. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest directors of all time. He wanted to make a film that his young daughter could watch. He also wanted to share his passion for film history and preservation, and for the magic of cinema itself. He turned to a book he had read with his daughter at bedtime – The Invention of Hugo Cabret, an illustrated novel by Brian Selznick.

Georges Méliès - The novel, and the resulting film, delve into the history of early filmmaker Georges. A Méliès stage magician who was enchanted by the early films of the Lumière brothers, Méliès constructed his own camera and film studio. He began shooting his first films in 1896, and subsequently made over five hundred in a wide range of genres, pioneering many key cinematic techniques. In 1913, however, his company was forced into bankruptcy, and his film stock melted down to make boot heels. He fell into obscurity, working at a toy booth in Montparnasse station. In 1931, Méliès' contribution to cinema was finally given official recognition, and he was awarded the Légion d’honneur medal, France’s highest honour.
Bits and Pieces

- The book ‘The Invention of Hugo Cabret’, by Brian Selznick, was inspired by an image from a 1902 French silent movie called *A Trip to the Moon*, which was made by George Méliès – one of the characters in the film.

- The Parisian train station set was built inside London’s Shepperton Studios. The external scenes were shot on location in Paris.

- *Hugo* is the first film shot in 3D for its director, Martin Scorsese.

- The film’s director, Martin Scorsese, decided to shoot the film in 3D because he wanted the audience to feel like they were ‘in’ the film with the characters.

- At the 2012 Academy Awards, Hugo won 5 Oscars: for Best Cinematography; Best Art Direction; Best Visual Effects; Best Sound Mixing and Best Sound Editing.

- The story of George Méliès, depicted in the film is largely true. Méliès was a magician and a toymaker, who turned to filmmaking when he saw the Lumière brothers demonstrating their new camera.

- Many of the silent films shown in the film Hugo are Méliès’ actual films – including *Le voyage dans La Lune* (1902).

- The automaton (mechanical man) in the film was inspired by real automata built between 1768 and 1774. Some of these automata are still working today.

- The opening shot of the film, when the camera follows a train into the station, took a year to complete. 1,000 computers were used to render each frame.

- The film’s director, Martin Scorsese made the film with clip-on 3D lenses over his normal glasses.

1895 Train Derailment

The original photo of the Granville–Paris Express wreck on 22 October 1895. The original *Gare de l’Ouest* name of the station is visible on the outside of the building.
The Gare Montparnasse became famous for a derailment on 22 October 1895 of the Granville–Paris Express that overran the buffer stop. The engine careened across almost 30 metres (100 ft) of the station concourse, crashed through a 60-centimetre (2 ft) thick wall, shot across a terrace and smashed out of the station, plummeting onto the Place de Rennes 10 metres (33 ft) below, where it stood on its nose. Two of the 131 passengers sustained injuries, along with the fireman and two conductors. The only fatality was a woman on the street below who was killed by falling masonry. The accident was caused by a faulty Westinghouse brake and the engine drivers who were trying to make up for lost time. A conductor was given a 25-franc fine and the engine driver a 50-franc fine.

The story of the train crash and the picture features in the 2007 children’s novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick and in its film adaptation, *Hugo*, where it was in one of Hugo’s nightmares.

**A Trip to the Moon or Voyage to the Moon (French: Le Voyage dans la lune)**

This is a 1902 French black-and-white silent science fiction film. It is based loosely on two popular novels of the time: Jules Verne’s *From the Earth to the Moon* and H. G. Wells’ *The First Men in the Moon*.

The film was written and directed by Georges Méliès, assisted by his brother Gaston. The film runs 14 minutes if projected at 16 frames per second, which was the standard frame rate at the time the film was produced. It was extremely popular at the time of its release, and is the best-known of the hundreds of fantasy films made by Méliès. *A Trip to the Moon* is the first known science fiction film, and uses innovative animation and special effects, including the well-known image of the spaceship landing in the Moon’s eye.

**Lost ending**

The ending sequence of the parade and statue was considered lost until 2002, when a well preserved complete print was discovered at a barn in France. The extended version was screened at the Pordenone Silent Film Festival in 2003.

**Hand-colored version**

Like many of Méliès’s films, *A Trip to the Moon* was sold in both black-and-white and hand-colored versions. A hand-colored print, the only one known to survive, was rediscovered in 1993 by the Filmoteca de Catalunya. [A film archive in Catalunya, Spain.] It was in a state of almost total decomposition, but a frame-by-frame restoration was launched in 1999 and completed in 2010 at the Technicolor Lab of Los Angeles - and after West Wing Digital Studios matched the original hand tinting by colorizing the damaged areas of the newly restored black and white. The restored version finally premiered on May 11, 2011, eighteen years after its discovery and 109 years after its original release, at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, with a new soundtrack by the French band *Air*. It was released by Flicker Alley as a 2-disc Blu-Ray/DVD edition, also including the documentary *The Extraordinary Voyage* about its restoration on April 10, 2012.
Film Terminology – Key Terms

- **Extreme long shot**: contains a large amount of landscape. It is often used at the beginning of a scene or a film to establish general location (setting). This is also known as an establishing shot.
- **Long shot**: contains landscape but gives the viewer a more specific idea of setting. A long shot may show the viewers the building where the action will take place.
- **Full shot**: contains a complete view of the characters. From this shot, viewers can take in the costumes of characters and may also help to demonstrate the relationships between characters.
- **Medium/Mid-Shot**: contains the characters or a character from the waist up. From this shot, viewers can see the characters' faces more clearly as well as their interaction with other characters.
- **Close-Up**: contains just one character's face. This enables viewers to understand the actor's emotions and also allows them to feel empathy for the character.
- **Extreme Close-Up**: contains one part of a character's face or other object. This technique is quite common in horror films, particularly the example above. This type of shot creates an intense mood and provides interaction between the audience and the viewer.
- **Overshot/Overhead shot**: The camera shots a scene from directly overhead.
- **High angle shot/elevated angle**: High angle (also called bird’s-eye view): The camera looks down at a character. This makes the observer feel more powerful than the character. The subject seems smaller/weaker or lower status.
- **Eye level shot**: The camera is positioned as if it is a person observing the scene so that the actors’ heads are at eye level.
- **Low angle shot**: Low angle: A low angle places camera below the character. This exaggerates the importance of the subject, making that character appear larger than life.
- **Undershot**: The scene is shot from below and this makes the subject look big and powerful.
- **Expressive/low key lighting**: Low light, shadowy. This creates an ominous or melancholy mood.
- **Realism/High key lighting**: Bright light. This creates a cheerful, happy mood.
- **Side lighting**: adds depth by accentuating certain features.
- **Soundtrack**: The music of the film.
**Overhead Shot:** The camera shots a scene from directly overhead.

**Close Up:** contains just one character's face. This enables viewers to understand the actor's emotions and also allows them to feel empathy for the character.

**Eye level shot:** The camera is positioned as if it is a person observing the scene so that the actors’ heads are at eye level.

**Undershot:** The scene is shot from below and this makes the subject look big and powerful.
**Low Lighting:** Low light, shadowy. This creates an ominous or melancholy mood.

**High key lighting:** Bright light. This creates a cheerful, happy mood.

**Low angle shot:** A low angle places camera below the character. This exaggerates the importance of the subject, making that character appear larger than life.
Analysing Screen Shots

Analyse each of the following screen shots, identifying as many of the key film terms as you can. Use the following headings to guide you: lighting/colour, camera work (shots and angles) and mise en scene.

Screen Shot 1

Screen Shot 2

Screen Shot 4
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Screen Shot 5

Screen Shot 6

Screen Shot 7

Screen Shot 8
Main Character Studies
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Seek and Destroy Questions

1. Where does Hugo live? How did he end up here?

2. How does Hugo obtain food?

3. Why is it so important for Hugo to keep the clocks running in the train station (important for him, not for the travellers)?

4. What does Hugo try to steal from Papa Georges? Why?

5. When Papa Georges catches Hugo stealing, he calls him a “reprobate.” What does this word mean?


7. Isabelle assures Hugo that the item Papa Georges took from him is safe. When Hugo returns again to the toy booth, asking for it, what is the “test” Papa Georges gives Hugo?

8. When Hugo passes the “test,” Papa Georges makes a deal with him. What is the deal?

9. Where did Hugo’s automaton come from?

10. What missing thing does Hugo need in order to get his automaton working? Where does he find it? How did it end up there?

11. Why does Isabelle agree to help Hugo solve his mystery?

12. Why does Hugo dream he has become an automaton?

13. What is the one possession Hugo takes with him to his new home?

14. Isabelle says Hugo must be “clandestine” and “steadfast.” What do these words mean?

15. Why do you think Papa Georges will not let Isabelle go to the movies?

16. Why does Hugo finally agree to show Isabelle the automaton?
17. Why is it so important for Hugo to make the automaton work? What “message” does he believe it contains? How does it ultimately “lead him home”?

18. What does the automaton do when Hugo turns the key?

19. Why might the key be heart shaped?

20. When Hugo and Isabelle accidentally spill all of Papa Georges’ drawings, Papa Georges crumples them up and says, “back from the dead” and calls Hugo “cruel” for getting out all the drawings. What does he mean?

21. What do Isabelle and Hugo discover about Papa Georges in the film history book by Rene Tabard?

22. What brought an end to Papa Georges’ film career?

23. How was the Station Inspector injured? Why is his injury important to the story?

24. Why does the florist, Mademoiselle Lissette, give the Station Inspector a flower? How do the two characters connect?

25. When Hugo jumps onto the train tracks to pick up his automaton, who saves him from the oncoming train?

26. At the party at the end of the film, the Station Inspector has a new leg brace. Who do you think made it for him? How do you know? Why do you think this person would do something like this for the Station Inspector?

27. When is flashback used and why?
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**Analysis Questions**

**Settings**
1. *Hugo*’s opening shot shows the streets and buildings of Paris as cogs in a giant machine. How is this idea developed throughout the film? What do you think this says about the filmmakers’ view of the world?

2. List the interior/exterior settings.

3. *Hugo* is set in Paris and the Montparnasse railway station during the winter of 1931. It is a heightened version of reality – a compilation of a number of train stations. Mise-en-scene and other effects used to establish the railway station, Paris streets and the distinctly French culture. Describe Scorsese’s Paris.

4. Hugo spends much time watching the hustle and bustle of the train station. What do other characters see? Write a paragraph description from their viewpoint.

5. Recreate Hugo’s apartment in the walls of the train station in a drawing.

**Characters**
1. **Main characters**: briefly outline the relationship between the following main characters.
   - Hugo,
   - Isabelle
   - Papa Georges
   - the station inspector

2. **Minor characters**: The hustle and bustle of daily life in the railway station represents the world in miniature (a microcosm). To what extent are the following minor characters stereotypes or individuals?
   - The railway station
     - Book seller, Monsieur Labisse
     - Café owner, her dog and ‘admirer’ Monsieur Frick
     - Flower seller
     - The policeman (with wife problems!)
   - Hugo’s family and friends
     - Hugo’s father
     - Hugo’s uncle Claude
     - The film researcher, Rene Tabard
     - George’s wife and former actress, Mama Jeanne

3. Georges says that Hugo is “a liar and a thief”. Is this fair assessment? What do other characters steal? Which other characters lie?

4. Hugo is alone in world. What moments highlight Hugo’s resourcefulness and resilience? When are we conscious of his loneliness and vulnerability?

5. Why does Isabelle befriend Hugo? In a paragraph, describe their first encounter from her point of view.

6. The station inspector is also an orphan. Why is he so intent on removing Hugo and the urchins to the authorities?

7. What is Hugo’s purpose in life? (Isabelle says: “Is that your purpose...fixing things?”)

8. What is Isabelle’s purpose in life?
9. How do the following characters restore Georges’ sense of purpose: Hugo, Isabelle, Mama Jeanne, Rene Tabard?

10. Georges is a forgotten film maker who has locked away painful memories of his glory days. Only his wife Jeanne knows his secret and understands his unhappiness. Why does Georges deny his past? How does Hugo see his past? Why isn’t Georges angry when his secret is discovered?

11. Choose Hugo/ the Station Inspector / Papa Georges and write about how that character’s experiences change him. In other words, what does the character “win to lose” or “lose to win”? What does the character want and what’s in his way?

12. ‘I was injured in the war, and it will never heal.’ – the station inspector. What makes the inspector an interesting character and more than a straightforward villain? How does his struggle, and its outcome, reflect the main plot of the film?

13. ‘If you lose your purpose, it’s like you’re broken.’ – Hugo. In what ways are different characters in Hugo ‘broken’ and what allows them to be ‘fixed’ again?

14. When Uncle Claude shows Hugo the station clocks, he says, “Time is everything.” In this context, he’s talking about making sure the clocks run on time but his statement is also a metaphor for the film. How else is time “everything” in the lives of the characters in the film?

Symbols
How are the following represented in the film? What is their meaning/purpose?

- Symbols of clocks and watches
- Hugo viewing the world ‘through’ time as it ‘literally’ ticks by him
- Hugo hanging off the clock arm to escape from the Station Inspector; suspended ‘in time’ (as his life is?)
- Georges Méliès as a recluse from his past glory; his initial reference to ‘ghosts’ when he sees the notebook and sketches of his automaton
- Iconography and intertextuality – train crash and archival image manifested in Hugo’s nightmare
- Flashbacks of Hugo with his father and his father’s death (as part of the exposition)

Themes
1. What are the main themes in the film? Give supporting evidence.
2. Which theme do you think is the most important and why?
**SCENE ANALYSIS: Opening credits and opening sequence/establishing shots.**

Briefly describe what you see in this scene (the composition): Cityscape, winter and snow, entering station, zooming through, clock and Hugo’s face peering out, world ‘inside’ station, inside the clock, Hugo winding clock, film title on screen

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<tr>
<th>Lighting/Colour</th>
<th>Sound</th>
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<td>The use of non-diegetic and diegetic sound - “steam train” sound overlays credits and acts as audio J-cut to opening shots. What is the effect of there being no dialogue in the opening sequence?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camera Work</th>
<th>Special Effects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whose point of view are we given? Why? How is it established? What is Hugo’s view of, and attitude, to his world? How is this shown? What is the significance of the representation of Hugo’s role as observer behind the walls and station clock? What is the effect of the pixilation shot*/quick frame rate that quickens the pace of the film and POV? i.e. the zooming and movement in this sequence? *Pixilation shot is a fast moving point of view (POV) produced by the camera using individual images/single frames in a burst of several per second.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What is the film trying to communicate in this scene?

What function does this scene have for the film as a whole?

How is the viewer positioned?
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**SCENE ANALYSIS:** ______________________________________

Briefly describe what you see in this scene (the composition):

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23
What is the film trying to communicate in this scene?

What function does this scene have for the film as a whole?

How is the viewer positioned?
Highlights from the Film

Fill in the boxes to explain how each of the following fit into the film “Hugo”.

- Clocks
- Mechanics & inventions
- Automaton
- Time
- The Past
- Historical events
- History of cinema
- Magic & illusion
- Keys and locks
- Secrets and mysteries
- Adventures & dreams
- Family
- Home
- Friendships
- Self/identity
**Original Writing**

Choose one of the following and create a piece of original writing (350 words - approx. one A4 page)

- is set in a particular historical time and place/context
- is set in a limited ‘space’ (like the railway station)
- explores an aspect of time
- uses a sustained metaphor or motif/symbol
- incorporates flashbacks
- uses intertextual references to real events and/or iconic images
- incorporates visuals as part of its narrative