“Tell me” questions

Activity sheet

FILM ENGLISH CLUB

EXTENSIVE VIEWING

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"Tell me" questions

Basic questions

- Was there anything you liked about the film? If so, what?
- What caught your attention?
- Was there anything you disliked? If so, what?
- Was there anything that puzzled or surprised you? If so, what?
- Was there anything you'd never seen before in a film? If so, what was it?
- Were there any patterns – any connections – you noticed in the film?

General questions

- Have you seen any films like this before? How were they similar? How were they different?
- Having talked about the film have you changed your mind about anything in the film? Have you seen anything new? Have you been surprised by anything?
- Would you like to know more about the film and how it was made? If so, what would you like to know?

Special questions

- How much time did the story in the film cover?
- Are there any parts of the story that took a long time to happen but were shown quickly?
- Were there any particular things in the film – shots, sounds, settings, images – that you liked or didn't like?
- Has anything in the film ever happened to you? Has anything in the film ever happened to someone you know?
- How many different stories can you find in the film?

Questions adapted from the book-talking questions in *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk* by Aidan Chambers

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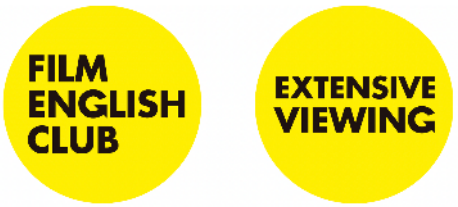

Teacher notes

The "Tell me" approach is a 'filmtalk' strategy which involves individuals thinking about films, sharing their ideas with a group, and listening and responding to what others think. It can be used to help students think and talk about any films books that students have viewed.

The "Tell me" approach:
• gives a starting point for thinking, talking about and responding to film texts
• requires students to express their own ideas as well as listen to and consider the thoughts of others
• extends the language students use to talk about film texts
• allows students to compare film texts, express opinions and information that assists their understanding of a film text
• helps students to make film text to self, text to text and text to world connections.

Try to select films to help your students make connections, for example, films by the same director, of the same genre, around the same theme, and films that explore different cultures and diversity.

Students might be more accustomed to responding to highly structured questions in their L1. If students are uncertain about how to respond to the questions, act as a model for the students by providing your own responses. Once the students become familiar with the process, the teacher's opinions should be left to later in the discussion to avoid any sense of a 'privileged' viewpoint.

It is very important to allow time for students to consider their responses to the questions.

List student responses to the Basic Questions. Discuss connections or links between likes, dislikes, puzzles and patterns.

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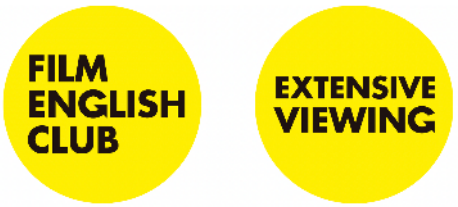

Build up the kind of language that will support the students to engage in the discussion. For example:

- characters, camera, colour, culture, composition, story, setting, sound, social issues
- structures such as:
    - I think…
    - I wasn't sure why…
    - I didn't really understand why…
    - It made me think of…
    - It reminded me of …
    - I liked the way…
    - I didn't really like the way…
    - I was puzzled by…
    - I was surprised by…
    - I noticed…
- language to express possibility or certainty: perhaps, maybe, definitely.

Provide some reference lists or visuals to support the discussion, for example:

- lists of the characters
- vocabulary that describes the characters, story, setting, colour, or sound
- screenshots from the film.

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About the Author

Kieran Donaghy is a freelance award-winning writer, international conference speaker and teacher trainer.
He is the author of books for students and teachers of English as a foreign language. His publications include *Film in Action* (Delta Publishing), *Writing Activities for Film* (ELT Teacher2Writer) *and Video*, *The Image in ELT* (ELT Council) and *Language Hub* (Macmillan).
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He is the founder of the independent publisher *Film English* which has won a British Council ELTons Award, an English Speaking Union Award and the MEDEA Award.
He is the founder of The Image Conference and co-founder of the Visual Arts Circle.
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About Film English

Film English is an independent publisher founded in 2009 specialised in the field of English language teaching and learning. The lesson plans designed around short films, viewing guides for feature-length films and other teaching resources on Film English make up the largest online resource bank of materials for teaching and learning English using film and video. Film English has won numerous awards including a British Council ELTons Award for Innovation in Teacher Resources, the most prestigious European media in education prize, the MEDEA Award, and an English-Speaking Union Award.
Find out more about Film English at: https://film-english.com/

About Film English Club

Membership of Film English Club allows unlimited access to all the lesson plans designed around short films, viewing guides for feature-length films and other teaching resources from the award-winning publisher Film English. Members can download our complete collection of materials and get regular updates each week.
Find out more about Film English Club at: https://film-english.com/club/

About The School for Training

The School for Training is a centre of excellence in teacher development offering innovative courses to language teachers in the centre of Barcelona and online. The school offers innovative courses on important areas of language pedagogy not normally covered on CELTA or DELTA courses such as how to use short films and videos, the role of empathy in language education, how to introduce social justice issues in the language classroom, and the fifth skill of Viewing in the language curriculum.
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