Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2015 Volume IV: Using Film in the Classroom/How to Read a Film

"The Visual Art of Writing" Exploring Chinese Culture through Film and Illustration

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.04.02, published September 2015
by Shannon Foster-Williams

Exposing students to ancient Chinese culture through film, students will use creative processes for analyzing film and writing. This unit is intended for elementary students who are emerging writers and engaging in creative writing. It is intended to guide students through the mental process of summarizing and comprehending content. This unit bridges text and film to enhance understanding of narrative content, using animated film to engage students in stories that are appealing and appropriate for young learners. Students will compare the written legend of *Ballad of Mulan* to the animated Disney film *Mulan,* which highlights Ancient China. Activities included in this unit aid students in building pictures that assist with writing. These visual cues will drive a process that lead**s** to detailed and descriptive writing, through a cycle of interpreting stories, class critiques, visual summaries, art compositions, and written narratives. The focus is not only on the artistry, but on a creative way to analyze film and text for the purpose**s** of communicating a story that is clear, concise, and accurate. Challenging students to create a written narrative that mirrors what is seen in their illustrated art work, this unit connects literature, film, history, and art.

(Developed for Visual Art/Art History and Culture, grades 3-4; recommended for Social Studies/Ancient China, grade 3, Language Arts/Writing, grades 4-5)