A Film Excerpt in Teaching: Three Levels of Work

You do not always need to screen entire films; working with a short film excerpt is often more effective. You hold pupils' attention, gain time for reflection, and can scale the methodology to match what your class can handle.

Three Levels of Difficulty

BASIC: Attentive viewing. You work with a standard, finished excerpt (2–5 minutes). You play it twice, setting a clearly bounded question before the second viewing (e.g. 'Where exactly did the camera position change?'). It requires no technical or filmmaking background.

EXTENDED: Intervening in playback. Try playing a familiar scene without sound, playing just the audio without the picture, or pairing the scene with different music found online. Pupils can compare how these changes affect the way the scene feels.

DEEP: The pupils' own version. This invites active creation. Pupils receive raw material (printed stills from the scene to rearrange, or short clips on a phone) and construct their own cut of the scene, which they then defend in front of the rest of the class.

When the Class Has Already Seen the Film: Revisiting a Scene

If the class already knows the film (from the cinema, another lesson or home), that is the ideal starting point. Pupils are no longer absorbed simply by following the plot and can focus on exactly how the scene is constructed. You do not need the whole film; a single scene of 2–5 minutes is enough.

In Practice: The 'Argument' Scene

Imagine a standard dialogue scene in which two characters argue and one walks out:

- **Basic:** Before the second viewing, ask: 'How did the scene hint that one of them would leave before they actually did?'
- **Extended:** Play the argument completely without sound and then with the original audio. Ask: 'Which character did you side with the first time, and which the second time?'
- **Deep:** Pupils receive six to eight printed stills from the argument and arrange them so that the viewer's sympathies are reversed compared with the original scene. They defend their sequence in front of the class.

Practical tip

Start at the basic level with the class you know best. Choose a scene lasting two to five minutes and give pupils a single question before the second viewing. With younger children, shorten the excerpt and simplify the question; with older pupils, sharpen it. The method stays the same; only the scene and the question change.