

DISCOVERY FILM FESTIVAL

Scotland's International Film Festival
for Young Audiences



Teachers' Resource: The Club Of Ugly Children (De club van lelijke kinderen)

(Second and) Third/Fourth Levels / Ages 12+

Created by Meg Brough

Discovery Film Festival: Sat 23 October - Sun 7 November 2021

discoveryfilmfestival.org.uk

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Introduction

Discovery Learning Resources give you exciting classroom activities to enhance Curriculum for Excellence delivery.

They are created by classroom teachers and education professionals. Each resource aims to:

- support and extend working with film in the classroom
- help prepare teachers for a class visit to a Discovery Film Festival film and to extend the impact of that visit for delivery of CfE
- develop confidence in Moving Image Education approaches and working with 21st Century Literacy / moving image texts

Each resource is free and available to download from

www.discoveryfilmfestival.org.uk/resources



The Club Of Ugly Children (De club van lelijke kinderen)

Dir: Jonathan Elbers

The Netherlands 2019 / 1h30m

Dutch with English subtitles

Synopsis

"Keep it clean!" – The slogan of the new president rings through the orderly street. It is to be taken literally, and that includes looks. One of the "ugly" kids is Paul, whose large ears are quite apparent on class photo day. When he and some of the "ugly" children are taken on a trip the next day, they soon realise that the president wants to get rid of them to make the country more beautiful. Paul manages to escape, and with help from the pretty Sara, they start an underground club to fight against the president. The movement soon grows bigger and quickly turns into a revolution. The kids will show the world that even children can rise up – and that you can do anything when you are proud of the way you are!

Themes

History, politics, family relationships, loyalty, love, friendship, courage, politics, discrimination, propaganda, collective responsibility, family vs. state, betrayal, democracy, dictatorships, majority decisions.



Ages: 12+

Advisory

There are occasional uses of strong language – one example each of ‘prick’, ‘shit’ and the f-word. The middle finger gesture is used once.

Some darker themes including violence towards children. This is hinted at but never explicitly shown. This pack aims to delve deeper into the metaphor for the Second World War and Nazi discrimination. Recommended for ages 12+ as this focuses on the central characters and their individual responsibility within a given political system, and at what point it becomes appropriate to challenge an authority that discriminates and has become undemocratically authoritarian.

Teacher's notes

This resource pack will be mainly of use to English, Media and Social Studies Teachers although the issues raised could be usefully explored in Personal and Social Education.

Ages 12 and above would gain most benefit from the film and associated tasks as it focuses on the central characters of a similar age. Therefore the work in this pack has been geared for Second and Third Level. The most obvious E&Os are listed after each task. However, there may be more from other curricular areas that could apply, depending on the approach to the task.



Before the film

Activity 1 – Film trailer analysis

<https://youtu.be/CTRqvBFOkQs>

You should watch the trailer and analyse the media language used before you attend the screening. This will give you a better understanding of how the director uses film language to explore the issues surrounding the film.

(These questions will help you to analyse any film trailer.)

1. What is the purpose of a film trailer? What might the reasons be for the creation of this film?
2. What information should be included in a successful film trailer? Has this film trailer been successful in providing this information?
3. Which genre do you think this film falls into? How can you tell?
4. Do you notice anything stylistic about this film? Does it remind you of any other films?
5. What will the tone or mood of this film be? How can you tell?
6. Now you have watched the trailer, who do you think might watch this film? Think about things such as age, gender and interest. Give reasons from the trailer to back up your answer.
7. What are the main societal issues you think will be highlighted in this film? How can you tell? Do you think this piece of media will challenge how you see the world?

As I listen or watch, I can:

- *identify and give an accurate account of the purpose and main concerns of the text, and can make inferences from key statements*
- *identify and discuss similarities and differences between different types of text*
- *use this information for different purposes.* **LIT 3-04a**

Activity 2 – Poster analysis

Have a look at the film's colourful poster. Use the worksheet which follows to analyse this in more depth. (This worksheet can be used to analyse future film posters.)



Film Poster Analysis Worksheet

Key Aspect	Things to consider	Notes
Audience	Who would most likely watch this film? How does this poster appeal to them?	
Setting	Is there a particular setting in time and place for this film? Is this important? How does the film poster tell us that?	
Colour	What colours are included in this poster? What do you think they represent?	
Camera	What is the main camera shot/position (eg close up, medium, long shot) What does this suggest? Can you say anything about the camera angle (low, straight, high)?	
Characters	What can we tell about the characters from the poster? Are there any characters who appear to be more important? Do you think what they are doing/saying important?	
Layout	How is the poster laid out? Are there any objects that stand out more than others. Why do you think that is? Are there any contrasts in the photo? Has anything been repeated? Why do you think this is? What text is on the screen? Where is the text placed on the page? What about the font? Describe this and think about the reasons for the shape.	
Text	What text is on the screen? Where is the text placed on the page? What about the font? Describe this and think about the reasons for the shape.	
Company and Production Information	What company and production information are on the poster? Why do you think they have chosen to include this information?	

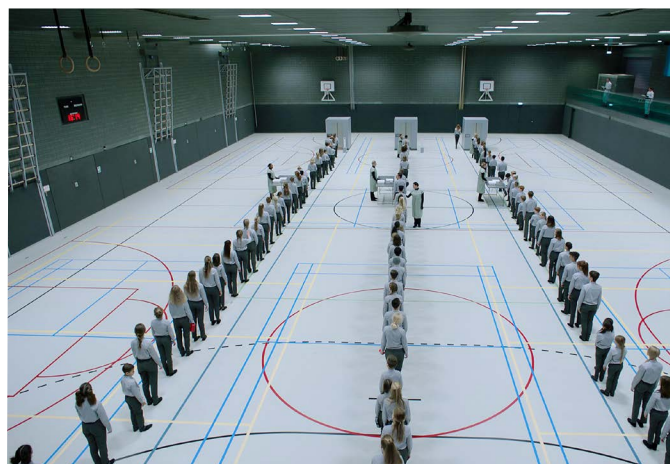
I can: • discuss and evaluate the structure, characterisation and/or setting using some supporting evidence • identify the main theme of the text and recognise the relevance this has to my own and others' experiences. • identify and comment on aspects of the writer's style and other features appropriate to genre using some relevant evidence. **ENG 3-19a**

After the film

Activity 1 – Representation

It is important to consider how a director represents their characters. Often what a film's characters do, see or wear will tell us a great deal about them. These directing choices will often help to highlight a film's themes or issues.

1. Have a look at the clothing and stance of the children in these two shots.



- What can you say about what the children are wearing? Why do you think the director has chosen to dress them this way?
- What can you say about the way children are behaving?
- What about the 'Cleaners'? Why do you think the director has chosen to dress them in these white suits?
- What do you think Jonathan Elbers is trying to say by representing his characters this way?

2. Now have a look at these two characters...



- How has Elbers used colour, lighting and camera to represent these characters as villains?

3. Now look at the scene with the protesting children.



- Why do you think Elbers has chosen to put these children in bright colours and fancy dress? What is he trying to say about society?

Setting

Jonathan Elbers explains that he also used the physical setting to represent the Dutch city as a bleak place.

"I like films that take place in an extraordinarily shaped world. We wanted to create a non-existent place with hard colours. A world where there's no more nuance, where you cannot feel at home and where everyone wants to escape. We travelled throughout the Netherlands in search of sleek grey buildings to create our own metropolis. All the buildings were then stripped from all their cosiness, and with visual effects more grey buildings were added. This is how the bare, harsh world of the film came into being. Slowly more colour shines through. First with Sara in her room, where we see photos in all colours. You can only buy grey, black and red in the paint store, but you can paint in every colour you want in the secret basement. This is where the uprising against the grey regime arises."

I can:

- discuss and evaluate the structure, characterisation and/or setting using some supporting evidence
- identify the main theme of the text and recognise the relevance this has to my own and others' experiences.
- identify and comment on aspects of the writer's style and other features appropriate to genre using some relevant evidence. **ENG 3-19a**

Activity 2 – Genre: Dystopia

The word “Dystopia” comes from the Greek meaning ‘bad place.’ Often in dystopian fiction, we are offered a negative vision of the future. Dystopias are societies in decline, with characters who battle pollution, poverty, technological control, and government oppression. Often the main characters will revolt against such a regime. Dystopian novels can challenge readers to consider current social and political climates.

The main conventions of the dystopian genre are listed below. How can we apply these to *The Club of Ugly Children*? Overall, can *The Club of Ugly Children* be classed as a Dystopian Film?

Convention	Can this be applied to <i>The Club of Ugly Children</i> ?	If yes, where do we see this?
Governments control their citizens in an extreme way		
Technology is used to control citizens		
Characters must fight for survival		
Characters lose their individuality		
Nature/the environment is destroyed		
The story criticises real life societies and/or politics		

*I can identify and comment on aspects of the writer’s style and other features appropriate to genre using some relevant evidence. **ENG 3-19a***



Activity 3 – Real life totalitarianism: Past and Present

Background

The Club Of Ugly Children was based on a book which was written in 1987 by Koos Meinderts. Director Jonathan Elbers explains: “Koos is amazing! He came by on the set and we talked about the script a few times. He is always uplifting and cooperative. His book from 1987 is a clear metaphor for the Second World War.”

Hitler was also a leader who discriminated against people who he did not feel fit in with his idea of “*the Germanic Race*.”

Watch this documentary by ‘The Armchair Historian’: <https://youtu.be/cDFFis0j4JM>

He calls Nazi Germany “*a drab nightmarish totalitarian dystopia*.” He explains what life was like for the average citizen and the discrimination faced by those who did not fit into his perfect ideal.

Using what you know about Nazism and what you have learned from this video – how does the way Isimo runs his city compare with what Hitler and the Nazis did to Germany?

Isimo's City		Hitler's Germany	
Differences			

How has Jonathan Elbers taken the story of the Second World War and made it relevant to our modern society? Can things be dealt in a way that would not have been possible in the Second World War or in 1987?

As I listen or watch, I can make notes, organise these under suitable headings and use these to understand ideas and information and create new texts, using my own words as appropriate.

LIT 2-05a



Activity 4 – Social Media

One thing that *The Club Of Ugly Children* included that was not available in either the Second World War or 1987 was the use of technology and social media.

Watch this video on The secret student resistance to Hitler - Iseult Gillespie - YouTube:
<https://youtu.be/ZtOKRsF6Rr0>

These young people were amongst those who were considered part of Hitler's ideal. However, just because they were not discriminated against, does not mean that they wanted to stand back and watch Hitler destroy and kill.

Today, social media can be extremely powerful in raising awareness, but can also be very dangerous in spreading hatred and forms of propaganda very quickly.

(Propaganda means information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, which is used to promote a political cause or point of view.)

By creating 'The Club Of Ugly Children' site, Sara shows us the power of social media.

By using hashtags, tweets and videos the children managed to support 'Paul the Untouchable' and overthrow the 'cleaners'.

- Can you think of any important issues which have been highlighted to you recently by the use of social media?
- Can you think of any instances where social media does contribute to the idea of 'beautiful vs ugly'?
- Write down three reasons why you must take care when sharing posts on social media.

Create your own Social Media Post

Imagine you were at school with Paul. Create a tweet, video, poster or picture which you could send out to help 'Paul the Untouchable.'

I can compare and contrast a society in the past with my own and contribute to a discussion of the similarities and differences. SOC 2-04a

I can gather and use information about forms of discrimination against people in societies and consider the impact this has on people's lives. SOC 2-16b

I can explain why a group I have identified might experience inequality and can suggest ways in which this inequality might be addressed. SOC 3-16a



Activity 5 – Democracy V Dictatorship/Totalitarianism

In the UK and other nations worldwide, people live under a democratic government. In a democracy, people are allowed to vote to elect their leaders and have their voices heard. UK Citizens have elected our Prime Minister and First Minister, along with many other political representatives.

There is another popular and common form of government around the world that does not allow their people to have a say in their government. This type of government is known as totalitarianism. Totalitarian countries are nations in which the government does not allow its citizens to take part in political decision making. Totalitarian regimes are also known as dictatorships.

Research Task

Currently, the State of **Eritrea** and **North Korea** are the only two nations in the world that still have governments which are officially classified as **totalitarian dictatorships**.

Choose either Eritrea or North Korea and do some research on how their leaders keep control of their citizens.

Ruling through Fear

Totalitarian leaders often rule through fear because they take advantage of people's emotions to keep them from revolting and protesting. When you live in fear, you do not know how to speak out against injustices because you are scared. We can see this in *The Club Of Ugly Children* when Paul's father, Filidoor, refuses to stick up for his son on National Television.

- Put yourself in Filidoor's shoes. Why did he take so long to stick up for his son?
- If you lived in a totalitarian country, would you have hesitated like Filidoor, or stuck up for Paul earlier?
- Would you have joined the children and revolted against the state?

Theme – Discrimination

Overall, what do you think both Koos Meindert and Jonathan Elberts were trying to say about discrimination in the story of *The Club of Ugly Children*? Would you like to live in a society where people are excluded just on their appearance?

I can use evidence selectively to research current social, political or economic issues.

SOC 2-15a

I can gather and use information about forms of discrimination against people in societies and consider the impact this has on people's lives. **SOC 2-16b**



Activity 6 – Imaginative Writing Task

Now you have considered how characters and setting are represented in a dystopia, along with learning about totalitarianism in real life, follow the writing prompts to plan for your own piece of dystopian writing.

Plan Ideas

First of all, think about the way you live now. Is there anything you can think of that might be scary if it happened to your society? In what ways are you currently controlled by the law/government? How could this be worse?

Answer the following questions to plan your story:

- Who is in charge of the state?
- What will your dystopian state be called?
- What does your leader/government want to do to change the city/state?
- How do they ensure this is done? What measures do they take? (Think about why your characters may live in fear.)
- How does this state look different to the one you live in?
- Who is/are your main character(s)?
- Why do they want to change their fate?
- How will they change the future of the state/society?

Dystopian Short Story Structure

Follow these writing prompts to write a dystopian short story:

● Introduction

Introduce your main character. Describe them and the awful situation they are in. Describe the places, buildings and colours. Explain who is in charge of the city/ state and how they are controlling the citizens.

● Disruption

Create a situation when your character decides to change and fight against this control. What happens? What are their plans? Who will help them? How do they feel?

● Rising Tension

What does your character have to do to prepare? What are they going to do to change the situation? How might this be dangerous? How do the people around them react to this?

● Climax

Create a situation where your character comes face to face with danger. This could be with the leader/government itself, or someone who is opposed to change.

● Resolution

Explain how things become more peaceful. What has changed? What does your character learn? What do others in the story learn? What is the main message you have been trying to highlight in your story? Ensure you have no loose ends to tie up.

Having explored the elements which writers use, I can create texts in different genres by: • integrating the conventions of my chosen genre successfully and/or • using convincing and appropriate structures and/or • creating interesting and convincing characters and/or • building convincing settings which come to life. **ENG 3-31a**



Evaluating this resource

We hope that you found this resource useful and appropriate.

Please do send us film reviews, letters from your pupils, documentation of classwork and your feedback by e-mailing mike.tait@dca.org.uk

Would you make a good Discovery Film Festival Case Study?

We are seeking a number of simple Case Studies in how teachers have used or are using Discovery films in the classroom across Curriculum for Excellence and across the Levels.

Any case studies that we develop would be intended for presentation on GLOW, the Creativity Portal and on Discovery Film Festival websites. We have a simple template to be completed and are keen to have classwork and documentation included.

If you would like to be a Discovery Case Study please e-mail sarah.derrick@dca.org.uk