

Teaching the Science Fiction Film *Blade Runner*

FRIEDMAN / MARCH 26, 2003

Class: Science Fiction and Fantasy

Level: 11 & 12

Purpose: This multi-day lesson plan will engage students through the medium of Sci-Fi film. It will give students the tools to analyze Science Fiction film and relate the content and themes to other works studied in the class. A short paper will also be written by students, the paper asks them to use their analytical film skills and knowledge of the Science Fiction medium.

Grad Standards: Standard: Literature and Arts Analysis and Interpretation - Literature Grades: High Grades 9-12

A student shall demonstrate the ability to interpret and evaluate complex works of literature by:

- A. describing the elements and structure of literature; the artistic intent; and the historical, cultural, and social background of the selected literature;
- B. applying specific critical criteria to interpret and analyze the selected literature;
- C. describing how particular effects are produced by the artist's use of the elements of literature; and
- D. communicating an informed interpretation using the vocabulary of literature.

Eldon Tyrell, chairman and founder of The Tyrell Corporation, the largest manufacturer of replicants, explains what makes the new models so much like humans.

Tyrell: "Commerce, is our goal here at Tyrell. More human than human is our motto. Rachael is an experiment, nothing more. We began to recognize in them strange obsession. After all they are emotionally inexperienced with only a few years in which to store up the experiences which you and I take for granted. If we gift them the past we create a cushion or pillow for their emotions and consequently we can control them better."

Deckard: "Memories. You're talking about memories."

Free Write: What is a human being?

Bring in articles regarding cloning.

Break Students into groups to discuss articles. Discuss the issues regarding cloning.

Assign Chap. 2 of "Do Robots Dream of Electric Sheep?"

Day 2: Discuss Story

- 1) What was the primary consequence of this war?
- 2) Why did more and more people begin leaving Earth to colonize other planets?

- 3) Why were the first androids developed?
- 4) What were the new tasks androids began to do?
- 5) Why did the UN make this new law?
- 6) If it was so easy to emigrate, why didn't everybody leave Earth?
- 7) Why did some androids want to return to Earth?

Discuss themes of Science Fiction present in film:

Synopsis of plot:

Introduction from Blade Runner

“Early in the 21st Century, THE TYRELL CORPORATION advanced robot evolution into the NEXUS phase - a being virtually identical to a human - known as a Replicant.

The NEXUS 6 Replicants were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them. Replicants were used Off-World as slave labor, in the hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets.

After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-World colony, Replicants were declared illegal on earth - under penalty of death. Special police squads - BLADE RUNNER UNITS - had orders to shoot to kill, upon detection, any trespassing Replicant.

This was not called execution. It was called retirement.”

Themes of Film:

Present possible choices for essay topics in the film:

Essay For Blade Runner The Essay will contain three pieces of evidence from the film

Use evidence from the film to support your claim.

1. How is imagery used throughout the film to achieve the themes of the film? Images you may want to include are:
 1. Discussion of the image of the eye, what might it symbolize?
 2. How is rain used in the film and what is its significance?
 3. How is light used throughout the film? What does this achieve
 4. Discussion of the environment and architecture, how and where do most people live? Advertisements, lights, compare where Tyrell lives to where J.F. Sebastian lives.
2. In Blade Runner, replicants are not supposed to be free nor equal to man. But when Man created replicants, they were given a reason and a conscience. Are replicants humans?

1. What rights should they be given?
2. Is it just that replicants have killed to save their own lives?
3. Should replicants be “retired” simply because they want to exist for longer than four years?
3. Who is the Hero in this story? Is Deckard on a hero quest or simply doing his job? Is Batty a hero? Use the characteristics of a hero that you identified while writing your hero quest and reading *The Golden Compass* to prove who, if anyone, the hero of the story is?
4. What are the biblical images and themes in *Blade Runner* and how do they relate to the themes of the film?
 1. Can Tyrell be seen as a man trying to play god? How is he punished? Is this Ironic?
 2. Can Roy and Pris be seen as a futuristic Adam & Eve? Compare their fall from life to the story of Genesis and Adam & Eve’s Fall from grace.
 3. What is the significance of Miss Salome dancing with her snake?
 4. Can Roy be seen as a Christ figure? Is he paying for the sins of humanity?
5. Any other topic approved by Mr. Friedman.

Study Guide Questions for *Blade Runner*

1. What does the opening shot suggest about the environment of earth in 2019?
2. What is the significance of the constant advertising?
3. Where is “Off-World”?
4. What is a “Blade Runner”? Why does Deckard come out of retirement?
5. What does “retirement” usually mean? How is the meaning changed here?
6. What crime did the replicants commit?
7. A “fail-safe device” is a sort of security system. Why is the replicants’ four-year life span a sort of security system?

What To look For:

The language of film . . . repeated images, phrases

Day 3: Begin to watch film

Hand-out questions to answer during the film:

Day 4: Continue to watch film

Stop film to comment on the plot development and discuss the issues of the film.

Continue study questions:

- 1) What crime did the replicants commit?
- 2) How does Bryant know they reached Earth?
- 3) Why did they try to break into the Tyrell Corporation?
- 4) What is the purpose of the Voigt-Kampff test?
- 5) What does Bryant mean when he says Zhora is both beauty and the beast?
- 6) Why does he call replicants “skin jobs”?
- 7) Do replicants have emotions? Why is this a problem?
- 8) A “fail-safe device” is a sort of security system. Why is the replicants’ four-year life span a sort of security system?

Day 5: Finish film

Continue study questions:

- 1) How can replicants be “more human than human”? What does this mean?
- 2) What is the replicants’ “strange obsession”?
- 3) Why does giving replicants a past make them easier to control?
- 4) Why is Deckard shocked that the Tyrell corporation has given replicants memories?

Final Study Guide For Blade Runner Name: _____ Period: _____

1. What is wrong with J.F. Sebastian’s genes? How are the replicants and J.F.’s conditions similar?
2. Why is it significant that Roy wins the game of chess?
3. Why is the statement “That’s a little out of my jurisdiction?” by Tyrell ironic?
4. How is the story of the prodigal son changed here? What is the significance?
5. Why does Roy put a nail through his hand? What does it symbolize?
6. What does the bird flying away suggest?
7. What do you think the Unicorn means?

Have students bring in a thesis statement for their paper

Day 6:

Have students collect evidence for their claim from the film work with other students to help each other out.

Have students present thesis to the class and discuss evidence.

Day 7:

Bring in rough drafts for group editing and feedback
Workshop day

Day 8:

Hand in papers. Read Issac Asimov's short story aloud, discuss the applications of clones and robots in our modern day world. How could replicants be compared to marginalized populations in our world?

Grading Criteria:

Organization

- 4 Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.
- 3 Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.
- 2 Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.
- 1 The information appears to be disorganized.

Quality of Information

- 4 Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.
- 3 Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.
- 2 Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.
- 1 Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.

Mechanics

- 4 No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.
- 3 Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors
- 2 A few grammatical spelling, or punctuation errors.
- 1 Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.