

Mainline station



Teachers' notes

Learning focus

- To explore concepts of selection, editing, sequence and juxtaposition
- To reinforce awareness of visual codes of framing, lighting, camera angle, etc
- To suggest that an image can have many meanings
- To develop skills of narrative, characterisation, creation of atmosphere

Classroom issues

This exercise is an updated and more structured adaptation of the English Centre pack *The Station*. The activities are fairly self-explanatory, but the following may be helpful:

Before You Start: These brainstorming introductory exercises invite pupils to start from their own personal experiences and move onto more imaginative and empathetic writing. The objective here is to explicitly raise pupils' awareness of their diverse experiences and the selection processes involved in their individual accounts. These need not be sustained pieces of writing, and a time limit of say 15 minutes might help focus the activity; as with many of the preliminary tasks in this book, the de-briefing and reporting back on comparisons and differences is the most significant feature here.

From Words to Pictures: This series of activities is specifically designed for two pairs working in tandem on different narrative possibilities, in order to highlight the differences in choice of image and perspective. Although we have reproduced the activities as a single chronological sequence to save photocopying costs, you may find it helpful to cut up the sheets and distribute each stage sequentially, to avoid instruction overkill, and to allow groups to work at their own pace. It is particularly important to focus pupils' attention on the reproduced examples, which raise issues of the photographer's choices of angle, framing and composition, as well as more editorial principles of montage and juxtaposition.

The main caveat is to ensure that pupils don't rush too hastily into ill-conceived decisions, but experiment and reflect on their images – not easy with younger children. It might be helpful to work with one group, particularly at Stage 5 (Plan, paste and position), where pupils frequently find it difficult to depart from the concept of a neat symmetrical layout. You could withhold the paste and sugar paper until you have had a chance to supervise each pair's sequence and overall design, if necessary encouraging more critically reflective students to adopt radical formats in the interests of diversity. Here again, your debriefing of the comparison of finished versions is the critical learning point. Each group of four could be asked to report back to the

class on the thinking behind their own two products and the stylistic and editorial differences between them. This would feed usefully into a final writing assignment.

From Pictures to Words: These activities bring the exercise back full circle from the visual to the verbal. The tasks each require some form of reflection, but are differentiated to allow pupils either to use their image sequence as a stimulus for creative writing, to develop it in script form with an emphasis on film language, or to write a critical account of their work, its effective use of visual language, and its implications.

National Curriculum references

Speaking and Listening: 1a, 1b, 1c
Reading: 1f, 2a
Writing: 1a, 1b, 1c

Follow-up practical assignments

If departmental resources permit, this activity would lead naturally into group production of a photographic sequence exploring the atmospheric potential of camera angle, framing, and sequences around a similar public space such as a supermarket, department store, market or playground.

- Students could work in groups of four with a simple SLR camera and a maximum of 12 shots, which must be fully researched, storyboarded and checked before the shoot. This would allow three groups to work from a single 36 exposure film. Pre-planning, a full recce (probably done in pupils' own time) and a formal evaluation or commentary would be an essential way of ensuring productive reflection.
- The use of a digital camera such as the Canon Ion would have the additional advantage of yielding computer images which can be down-loaded onto video to create a video stills sequence; since the photo-disc is re-cyclable, costs are minimised after the initial outlay of the camera.
- Most effectively and cheaply of all, a similar sequence of up to 12 shots on video would allow for further experimentation with focus, camera movement and editing (the cut, the dissolve, the fade-to-black) to create a moving image sequence which would require no post-production editing, but would also allow for experimentation with different music tracks, voice-over narration or sound effects.

Further resources

For further discussion of atmosphere and visual technique, try screening the opening section of the film *Witness* (dir. Peter Weir, available from Virgin Megastore), which features Grand Central Station seen through the eyes of an Amish child who later witnesses a murder.

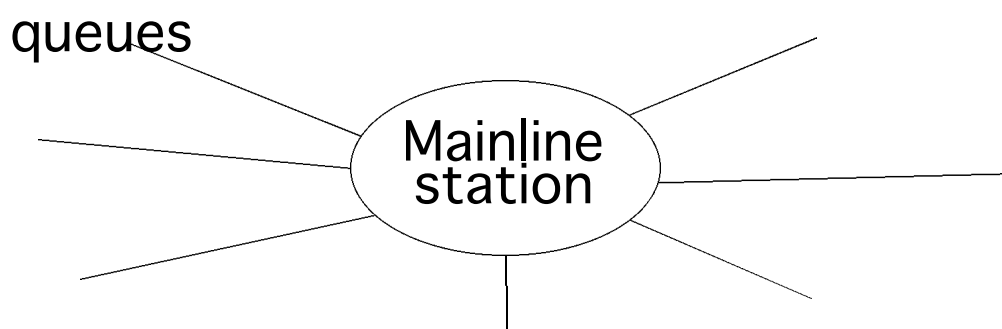
Mainline station

This activity aims to make you think about:

- the ways film or television images work to tell a story, set up a mood or atmosphere, or take you inside the mind of a character;
- the different techniques a film director can use to establish an atmosphere without describing it in words;
- the decisions s/he needs to take about what to film, how, where and in what order.

Before you start

In a group of four, brainstorm everything you might expect to see, hear, smell or feel at a mainline railway station. You could do this as a spider diagram, like this:



Then, in your group, each take one of the following roles:

- a runaway arriving at the station
- a visitor or tourist far from home
- a detective tracking a suspect in the station
- someone arriving to meet a long-lost friend in the station

Each of you should write a short description of first impressions of the station from the point of view of the person you have chosen, including some or all of the features you brainstormed. In your writing, try and choose your words carefully to show what your character is feeling and thinking.

When you've finished, compare your different versions and points of view. Talk about any differences in your writing, thinking especially about:

- the words you each chose
- the objects and experiences you chose to mention
- the order in which you chose to describe things

Now you're going to experiment with ways of creating a similar effect using visual images with no words at all, just as a film director does.

Mainline station – from words to pictures

This is a series of photographs about a teenage girl arriving at a station in Central London.

Some of the shots are of the girl herself; others show the station environment as she herself might see it – in other words, the station seen through her eyes.

Your job is to construct a sequence of 20 – 24 images which builds up a picture of the girl, her feelings, and her experiences in the station.

1 Who's that girl?

First you need to think about who the girl is, and why she's at the station. She could be in the situation of one of the people you wrote about earlier; or she could have left home after a row. She might be homeless, lost, or on her way to somewhere else. On the other hand, she might just have come up to see the sights of London, for a shopping trip or night out at a dance club, or for a job interview.

In your same group, work in two pairs. Each pair should decide who they think the girl is, why she's at the station, and the sorts of feelings and ideas going through her head. Try and make sure each pair has chosen a different viewpoint.

2 Create the character

Choose **not more than 8 pictures of the girl** which you think best fit the situation you've decided on.



For example, you might use shot 8 to show that she's thrilled to be sightseeing up in London, but **not** shot 11, which might suggest she's feeling lonely and miserable.

Or you could use shot 3 to suggest that she knows exactly where she's going – but *not* shot 13.



3 Visualise her viewpoint

Now choose which pictures of the station seem to reflect her mood. For example, a shot of a food-stall could suggest hunger or lack of money; an empty platform might create a sense of loneliness, etc.

Think also about the 'look' and framing of the different pictures. For example:

- **The position of the camera makes a difference:**
A high-angle camera looking down on its subject can make a person seem weak and vulnerable; a low-angle shot looking up can give a powerful, even threatening, impression.



- **Colour, contrast and lighting creates different effects.**
What's the effect of the dark background in these two shots?



4 Sort out a sequence

Cut out your chosen pictures. Now think very hard about how to order them into a sequence. Each picture can have many possible meanings, and those meanings will change according to:

- the story you're telling
- the pictures before and after it.

For example, here's that girl again.
Is she sad, worried, scared, thoughtful?



Now look at the photo again, next to the following shots. Do you 'read' her expression in the same way each time?



Experiment with the order of your chosen pictures. Think hard about the atmosphere you're trying to convey, and the most effective way to **juxtapose** or position the images in relation to each other.

5 Plan, paste and position

Finally, paste up your sequence onto sugar paper. Think hard about how to place them on the page most effectively. For example, you could try out some of the following layouts:

- Mount the pictures in neat rows reading from right to left
- Make a montage with overlapping pictures following a pattern on the page
- Design a 'reading trail' to lead the eye of the viewer from one image to the next
- Set the pictures up as a storyboard for a film, with space to add a music soundtrack, voice-over or sound effects (see the example on page 36)

6 Swap selections

Now compare your version with the others' in your foursome. How are they different? How has your view of the girl's mood and story influenced the pictures you chose and the order you placed them in?

Mainline Station: From pictures to words

Try writing about your scene in **one** of the following ways:

- Imagine you are the girl. Write down the thoughts, images, feelings and sensations which pass through your mind as you arrive in the station. You could later record your ideas onto audio-tape with some music or sound effects which you feel echo your experiences.
- Write the girl's diary entry describing the reasons for her arrival at the station, her experiences while there, and what happens to her next.
- Imagine you are the director of a short film entitled *Mainline Station*. Write a sheet of instructions for your camera operator explaining the range of shots you want her/him to include, with reasons for your choices. Add some new images of your own to the shots you've already selected – you could sketch or storyboard them, or simply describe what you want to show, and why.
- Turn your images into a documentary film called *Mainline Station* by writing a script for a voice-over commentary which helps to give your images a clearer meaning.
- Write about the sequence you have constructed, comparing it with another pair's version which seems to you to be very different. Describe:
 - the different mood of each sequence
 - the differences in choice of images
 - the overall effect of each one.

Then say what you think you have learned from doing this work about the different effects created by camera angles, framing of shots, and sequence.













English & Media Centre Publications Order Form 2004

TITLE	PRICE	CODE	QTY	£	COST	p
▲● Arthur Miller	£49.95	AM01				
▲● Beautiful Game  EMC2-beautiful_game (inc. video & DVD)	£59.95	BG01				
Changing Stories	£7.95	CS01				
EMC Advanced Series:						
▲● Pre-1770 Drama: Elizabethan & Jacobean (1 copy book)	£32.95	EMA01				
▲● Pre-1770 Drama: Elizabethan & Jacobean (set of 10 books)	£95.00	EMA01				
▲● Modern Novel, The: Critical Approaches (1 copy book, video & CD)	£39.95	EMA02				
▲● Modern Novel, The: Critical Approaches (set of 10 books)	£95.00	EMA02				
▲● Texts in their Times: Victorian & Modern (1 copy book, CD)	£39.95	EMA03				
▲● Texts in their Times: Victorian & Modern (set of 10 books)	£95.00	EMA03				
▲● Text Reader Critic: Introducing Contexts & Interpretations (1 copy book)	£32.95	EMA04				
▲● Text Reader Critic: Introducing Contexts & Interpretations (10 copies book)	£95.00	EMA04				
▲● Studying Othello (1 copy book)	£39.95	OTH01				
▲● Studying Othello (set of 10 books)	£95.00	OTH10				
▲ Studying Othello Video (video only)	£19.95	OTHV01				
EMC KS3 English Series:						
▲● The Fiction Pack (inc. video)	£59.95	EMK01				
▲ The Drama Book (1 copy)	£9.95	EMK02				
▲ The Drama Book (15 or more copies)	£7.95	EMK02				
▲ Drama – <i>Hannah and Hanna</i> Video (video only)	£19.95	EMA03				
▲ Drama – <i>Helmet</i> Video (video only)	£19.95	EMK04				
▲ The Non-fiction Book (1 copy)	£9.95	EMK05				
▲ The Non-fiction Book (15 or more copies)	£7.95	EMK05				
▲ The Non-fiction Video (video only)	£9.95	EMK06				
▲ The Media Book (1 copy)	£9.95	EMK07				
▲ The Media Book (15 or more copies)	£7.95	EMK07				
▲ The Media Video (video only)	£14.95	EMK08				
▲ The Poetry Book (1 copy)	£9.95	EMK09				
▲ The Poetry Book (15 or more copies)	£7.95	EMK09				
▲ The Poetry Video (video only)	£14.95	EMK10				
Teachers' Guide & Notes CD Rom	£29.95	EMK11				
English Curriculum: Media KS3	£7.95	ECM01				
English Curriculum: Reading - 1, Comprehension	£12.95	ECR01				
English Curriculum: Reading - 2, Slow Readers	£12.95	ECR02				
English Curriculum: Reading - Cassette	£6.50	ECR03				
English Department, The	£7.95	ED01				
English Record (1 copy)	£3.00	ER01				
English Record (set of 30)	£45.00	ER01				
▲ Gulliver's Travels (1copy)	£9.95	GT01				
▲ Gulliver's Travels (15 or more copies)	£7.95	GT01				
▲● Inspector Calls, An (inc. video)	£59.95	IC01				
Island, The	£3.95	ISL01				
▲● KS2 English & Literacy Pack  EMC2-KS2_literacy (inc. CD & posters)	£49.95	KS2P01				
▲● KS3 English Units	£39.95	KS3E01				
▲ Klondyke Kate Revisited (1 copy)	£9.95	KK01				
▲ Klondyke Kate Revisited (15 or more copies)	£7.95	KK01				
Literary Terms	£9.95	LT01				
Macbeth	£4.95	MB01				
▲● Making Junk (inc. video)	£29.95	MJ01				
Making Media	£12.95	MM01				
Making Stories	£7.95	MS01				
▲● Media Pack, The: Units for GCSE Media & English (inc. video)	£59.95	KS4M01				
More Poetry Posters (set of 10)	£25.00	PP01				
▲ Of Mice and Men Study Guide	£5.95	OM01				
▲● Panic Attacks (inc. video)	£59.95	PA01				
▲● Picture Power Book	£12.50	PICB01				
Picture Power II. CD  EMC2-picturepowerII (1 copy)	£29.95	PIC01				
Picture Power II. CD  EMC2-picturepowerII (5 copies for networking)	£59.95	PIC01				
▲● Poetry Pack, The	£49.50	POP01				
Poetry Video, The, A Poetry Pack Resource (video only)	£24.95	POV01				
▲● Poetry Pack and Video, The (inc. video)	£59.95	POVP01				
▲● Production Practices	£12.50	PROD01				
Reading Fictions	£7.95	REF01				
Reading Stories (1 copy)	£9.95	RES01				
Reading Stories (set of 15)	£45.00	RES01				

