

# Early Cinema

Second and Third levels – Literacy, Social Studies, Expressive Arts, Technologies, Health and Wellbeing

## Overview

The context for study is learning about early cinema in Scotland

The resource is designed to be used in conjunction with the educational website **Scotland on Screen**.

## Three-Step Approach

Our suggestions for learning experiences have been organised into three steps:

- 1 Explore** – Close reading and discussion
- 2 Discover** – Find out more (go into greater depth)
- 3 Create** – Make something new

Each activity can be done on its own but the learning journey is more rewarding when it involves all three steps.

### Prior learning:

Learners will be able to reflect on what they know about cinema. They may be aware that cinema is a popular form of entertainment but not fully aware of its origins and history. Learners should reflect on what they know about going to the cinema and watching films today to see the historical contrasts.

Learners should develop their understanding of how early films are constructed. How and why were these films made? Who made them? Where were they shown and what audience were they intended for?

### Capabilities:

**Successful learners:** By exploring familiar themes using accessible media, learners are enthused and motivated. The use of technology for learning is encouraged. Creative and independent thinking is stimulated.

**Confident individuals:** By making comparisons between the past and the present, learners can gain confidence in researching and presenting historical information. The breadth of activities allows them to achieve success in different areas and to communicate their own ideas.

**Responsible citizens:** Learners develop an understanding of the different roles and safety procedures required to run a cinema. By considering the origins of cinema in Scotland, learners see the importance of entertainment for health and wellbeing and the role of film exhibitors and filmmakers in the community.

**Effective contributors:** By stimulating critical thinking and discussion in the analysis of moving image texts and by enabling team work on creative projects, learners are encouraged to be proactive in their learning journey.

## Relevant Experiences and Outcomes:

### Literacy & English

As I listen or watch, I can identify and discuss the purpose, main ideas and supporting detail contained within the text, and use this information for different purposes.

**LIT 2-04a / LIT 3-04a**

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 / LIT 3-05a**

I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own. **LIT 2-07a**

When listening and talking with others, I can:

- share information, experiences and opinions
- explain processes and ideas
- identify issues raised and summarise main points or findings
- clarify points by asking questions or by asking others to say more. **LIT 2-09a / LIT 3-09a**

I regularly select and read, listen to or watch texts which I enjoy and find interesting, and I can explain why I prefer certain texts and authors / I can identify sources.

**LIT 2-11a / LIT 3-11a**

To show my understanding across different areas of learning, I can identify and consider the purpose and main ideas of a text and use supporting detail.

**LIT 2-16a / LIT 3-16a**

I can use my notes and other types of writing to help me understand information and ideas, explore problems, make decisions, generate and develop ideas or create new text. I recognise the need to acknowledge my sources and can do this appropriately. **LIT 2-25a / LIT 3-25a**

By considering the type of text I am creating, I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary for my audience.

**LIT 2-26a / LIT 3-26a**

### Technologies

Throughout all my learning, I can use search facilities of electronic sources to access and retrieve information, recognising the importance this has in my place of learning, at home and in the workplace. **TCH 2-03b / TCH 3-04a**

I can create, capture and manipulate sounds, text and images to communicate experiences, ideas and information in creative and engaging ways. **TCH2-04b**

Through discovery and imagination, I can develop and use problem-solving strategies to construct models. **TCH 2-14a**

### Social studies

I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past / present an informed view. **SOC 2-01a / SOC 3-01a**

I can investigate a Scottish historical theme to discover how past events or the actions of individuals or groups have shaped Scottish society. **SOC 2-03a**

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 describe the factors contributing to a major social, political or economic change in the past and can assess the impact on people's lives. **SOC 3-05a**

I can discuss why people and events from a particular time in the past were important, placing them within a historical sequence. **SOC 2-06a**

I can consider the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed land use development and discuss the impact this may have on the community. **SOC 2-08b**

Having explored my local area, I can present information on different places to live, work and relax and interesting places to visit. **SOC 2-10a**

### Health and Wellbeing

Opportunities to carry out different activities and roles in a variety of settings have enabled me to identify my achievements, skills and areas for development. This will help me to prepare for the next stage in my life and learning.

**HWB 2-19a / HWB 3-19a**

I am investigating different careers/occupations, ways of working, and learning and training paths. I am gaining experience that helps me recognise the relevance of my learning, skills and interests to my future life.

**HWB 2-20a / HWB 3-20a**

### Expressive Arts

I have experienced the energy and excitement of presenting/performing for audiences and being part of an audience for other people's presentations/performances.

**EXA 2-01a / EXA 3-01a / EXA 3-01b**

I have experimented with a range of media and technologies to create images and objects, using my understanding of their properties. **EXA 3-02a**

I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work.

**EXA 2-07a / EXA 3-07a**

I can create, adapt and sustain different roles, experimenting with movement, expression and voice and using theatre arts technology. **EXA 2-12a / 3-12a**

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through drama.

**EXA 2-13a**

I have developed confidence and skills in creating and presenting drama which explores real and imaginary situations, using improvisation and script.

**EXA 2-14a / EXA 3-14a**

## Interdisciplinary learning and moving image education

Interdisciplinary learning is an important element within Curriculum for Excellence. Moving image texts provide an excellent stimulus for interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

Interdisciplinary learning enables learners to:

- Make clear connections with literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning.
- Apply what is being learned in new, different and collaborative ways.
- Apply critical thinking and progress their learning, for example through asking and answering questions, exploring an issue or topic, solving problems or completing a final project.
- Deepen their understanding of a topic and to test their learning in 'real life' scenarios.

## Significant aspects of learning

Following the learning journey will allow teachers to gather assessment evidence of progress in Literacy and English, as learners:

- engage with and create a broad range of texts, including Scottish and Scots texts
- use reading and listening strategies to understand, analyse and evaluate texts
- find and use information
- develop critical literacy skills, including evaluating sources
- create texts of increasing complexity using more sophisticated language
- develop and use higher-order thinking skills

And in Social Studies, as learners:

- understand the place, history, heritage and culture of Scotland and appreciate local and national heritage within the world
- become aware of how people live today compared with the past
- understand economic, political and social issues
- become aware of change, cause and effect, sequence and chronology
- engage in activities which encourage enterprising attitudes



## Lord and Lady Overtoun's Visit to MacIndoe's Show

(pre-1908. 1 min) 35mm/B&W/Silent

Lord and Lady Overtoun visit a travelling fairground Bioscope Booth.

The showman, Mr MacIndoe (wearing a white cap), welcomes them and takes a bow.

Look out for: **The way the images are framed**

**Decorative frontage (and doors revealing the fairground organ)**

**The traction engine – used as power source and to pull the show around**

## EXPLORE

### Reading, Listening and Talking

Key Questions: *Questions can be set as an individual reading activity with pupils writing their answers OR as a talking activity splitting the class into groups.*

Why do you think this visit to the show was filmed? What do you think Lord and Lady Overtoun saw inside?

What sort of films do you think people watched in a fairground Bioscope booth? Were they like the films we watch today?

What do you think the machine (traction engine) to the right of the steps was used for?

Why do you think the booth is decorated? What attraction is behind the big doors?

The films shown were silent. How would the showman at the fair make the films more interesting for an audience? Think about the sound effects and commentary you could add to this film.

What camera shots are used to capture the action? Why do you think these were used at that time?

## DISCOVER

### Sciences

What makes the film look old? Find out what happens to nitrate film over time.

What work do film archives do to preserve and repair old films?

### Social Studies

Find out what sort of people went to see films at the fairground. What did they do? What age were they? Were they rich?

Research what other attractions you would find at the fair in 1908.

Are there any travelling cinema shows today? What do they look like? Compare these with the Bioscope Booth.

### Expressive Arts – Art & Design

Learn about fairground art and decoration. What sort of design was popular in the early 1900s?

## CREATE

### Technologies

Imagine you have invented the Bioscope! How will it be powered? Who will invest in its manufacture? Who will buy it?

Design and describe your invention. Create an advertisement to sell it.

### Literacy / Expressive Arts – Drama, Art & Design

Pretend to be a showman. What do you do and say to encourage people into your Bioscope Booth?

Write a commentary for the film and perform it while the film is screened to an audience.

Create a documentary film about a visit to your local cinema. Interview some of the staff who work there to find out about their jobs.

Put on a fairground cinema show.\*

**\*See associated activity sheet**



## Glasgow Trams

(c1902. 2 mins) 35mm/B&W/Silent

'Phantom rides' on trams in Glasgow city centre. Film attributed to pioneering English film company Mitchell and Kenyon.

Look out for: **The phantom (or 'ghost') ride film technique**  
**Various activities on the busy streets**  
**Late Victorian / Edwardian clothing**

## EXPLORE

### Reading, Listening and Talking

Key Questions: *Questions can be set as an individual reading activity with pupils writing their answers OR as a talking activity splitting the class into groups.*

Watch the single shots showing the phantom ride technique. How do you think these were filmed? What effect were the filmmakers trying to create?

Why do you think this film technique was called a 'phantom ride'?

Why do you think this film was made? Who would have seen it and where?

Discuss the way people are dressed in the film. Do you think these people are affluent or poor? What makes you think this?

Discuss the design of the trams. How practical would an open top tramcar have been?

What do you see on the streets that is different from today?

Where do you think the people in the film are travelling to? What time of day do you think the film was shot?

## DISCOVER

### Health and Wellbeing / Expressive Arts – Art & Design

Find out more about items of clothing worn by the Victorians and Edwardians. Were they practical? Were they comfortable?

What sort of conditions would the people in the film have lived in?

### Social Studies

What can you discover about the filmmakers Mitchell & Kenyon? Why are their films special to us today?

Using films, photographs and written sources, compare the city streets of Glasgow today to Glasgow in the early 1900s. What has changed and what remains the same?

### Social studies / Technologies

Find out what forms of entertainment were available before cinema was invented. Look at how peepshows, Dioramas and Panoramas anticipated film techniques such as the 'phantom ride'. Where could you experience these shows?

Early film was shot differently from films today. Cameras were fixed to a tripod, had a single lens, and were very heavy. Make a list of interesting things you could film using a single, static shot.

### Literacy / English

Research trams and tram routes, old and new. Hold a debate about the advantages of trams compared to busses as a mode of public transport.

## CREATE

### Expressive Arts – Music

Research what sounds were used to accompany early cinema and create a soundtrack that complements the film.

### Technologies / Expressive Arts – Art & Design

Can you build a machine to film a phantom ride around your street or playground? Look at modern camera 'dollies' for inspiration.

Create your own moving panorama (also known as myriorama) or magic lantern show. What materials and technologies can you use today that the Victorians did not have?

### Literacy / Expressive Arts – Art & Design

Design a poster to warn Edwardian pedestrians of the dangers of crossing tramlines.



## Early Trick Films

(c1899 – 1912. Compilation length: 13 mins) 16mm/B&W/Silent

A compilation of early 'trick' films. These use film techniques to create visual illusions and 'make the fantastic appear real'. *Thanks to BFI for permission to use this film.*

Look out for: **Different 'trick film' techniques**  
**Comedy and surprise**  
**Fantastical film sets**  
**Spooky and dramatic effects**

## EXPLORE

### Reading, Listening and Talking

Key Questions: *Questions can be set as an individual reading activity with pupils writing their answers OR as a talking activity splitting the class into groups.*

Watch the films and write down what tricks you can see.

Which of these are stage tricks (performed for the camera) and which are tricks created using a film technique?

Do you find the tricks convincing? Discuss why or why not.

Watch the film 'The Motorist' (1906) and describe what is happening. How does the film end?

Do you think an audience today would find the trick films as entertaining as an Edwardian audience? Discuss your ideas and give examples of the sort of special effects we see in films today.

## DISCOVER

### Social studies / Health and Wellbeing

The Cinematograph Act (1909) required nitrate film to be shown only in purpose-built facilities licensed by local authorities. Debate whether you think these films would be more enjoyable if seen at a travelling fairground or in a cinema building.

### Technologies

Learn about optical toys and magic lantern shows. These forms of entertainment came before cinema but anticipate some of the trick film techniques. How?

How were the trick film effects (stop motion, dissolves, double-exposure) created? Conduct some experiments and present your findings.

### Literacy

Some trick films (like 'Dante's Inferno') were adaptations of well-known stories. What stories do you think would make good trick films and why?

### Expressive Arts - Drama

Discuss the expressive acting techniques used in the films. Compare to a range of acting techniques used in films today.

## CREATE

### Literacy / Technologies

Write a script and draw a storyboard for your own trick film.

Recreate the tricks seen in the compilation.

### Expressive Arts - Drama

Imagine you had a time machine to travel back to one of Scotland's earliest cinemas (or a travelling fairground) to see trick films. Act out a drama about going to the cinema, being welcomed by the cinema manager/showman, and the experience of watching trick films.

Demonstrate the acting techniques used by the performers in the films. Take turns being the film director.



## Hawick Scenes

(1909 - 1910. 13 mins) 35mm/B&W/Silent

Local topical films of events in the Scottish borders, including a visit from Sir Robert Baden Powell.

Look out for: **Scenes of Edwardian life and leisure time**  
**The early Scout Movement**  
**Soldiers marching**

## EXPLORE

### Reading, Listening and Talking

Key Questions: *Questions can be set as an individual reading activity with pupils writing their answers OR as a talking activity splitting the class into groups.*

Discuss the type of shot used to frame the action. Why do you think this one shot was used throughout?

Who do you think watched these films? Why would they want to see them?

Write down all the activities the children are doing in the film. Would you enjoy some of these activities today?

Do the boys and girls do different activities? Discuss why you think this is? Would you enjoy being an Edwardian child?

The 'local topical' film was a type of documentary. What other film genres do you know? Can you find examples from the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive, or by naming other films you know?

## DISCOVER

### Social Studies / Citizenship

Research Baden Powell and his connection to the Scout Movement. What has changed in Scouting since the early days?

Are Scouting and Guiding still popular? Do a survey around school to see who attends Scouts or a similar club.

This film was probably shown in local cinemas. Find out how many cinemas your community had in 1910 and what they looked like.

The images of soldiers marching seems to foreshadow the First World War, which would take place a few years later. Find out more about the First World War and how soldiers were recruited.

### Health and Wellbeing

Do you think children were more active and healthy in 1910? Were they happier than children today? Hold a debate using films and other historical sources as evidence.

## CREATE

### Literacy / Expressive Arts

Create a local topical film of your community. When would be a good time of year to make your film? What events are taking place that would allow you to film lots of people? (Tip: Make sure you have permission to film them first!)

### Expressive Arts - Drama / Art and Design

Recreate one of the scenes with children in them. Pay close attention to the clothes worn and the local surroundings. Can you find other films that show Edwardian children at play?

### Social Studies / Skills for Work

Find out what jobs people working in cinemas had in 1910-1920. Fill in an application form for the job of your choice.\*

**\*See associated activity sheet**



## Miss Violet Hopson visits Dundee Fire Station

(1920. 7 mins) 35mm/B&W/Silent

Movie star Violet Hopson and her companion (probably co-star Stewart Rome) visit Dundee fire station and watch a fire fighting display. Miss Hopson was promoting the film 'Her Son'.

Look out for: **The photograph of the La Scala Cinema**  
**The curious onlookers**  
**Techniques demonstrated by the fire fighters**  
**The 35mm movie camera mounted on a tripod**

## EXPLORE

### Reading, Listening and Talking

Key Questions: *Questions can be set as an individual reading activity with pupils writing their answers OR as a talking activity splitting the class into groups.*

Who are the different people in the film? Why are they there and what are they doing?

Why do you think so many people came out to see Violet Hopson? What makes her stand out from the crowd?

What different pieces of fire fighting equipment and techniques can you see?

Why do you think there is a photograph of a building at the start of the film? What kind of building is it and do you think it would be familiar to the audience watching?

How might the presence of film cameras have made the visit even more exciting to the people who came to watch?

## DISCOVER

### Social Studies

Find out more about Violet Hopson's life and career. Research how celebrities were treated in the 1920s compared with today.

This film was sponsored by the La Scala - the first purpose-built cinema in Dundee. Research the design and fate of cinema buildings built between 1910 and 1930. Can you find any in your town?

### Technologies

Find out more about fire fighting technology through the ages. What were the most important inventions and why? What has changed since 1920?

This film was shot on 35mm nitrate film stock. What are the dangers of nitrate films? How do film archives look after them? Older children may wish to know about the Glen Cinema disaster in Paisley where 69 children were tragically killed when a fire created mass panic.

In the film we see a glimpse of a film camera mounted on a tripod. Find out what sort of camera this might have been and how it worked.

## CREATE

### Literacy

Write a news story about Miss Violet Hopson's visit to Dundee.

### Expressive Arts - Drama / Music

Imagine you were living in Dundee in 1920. How might you interact with the people in the film? Act out the roles of the different people you would meet.

Foley artists create realistic sound effects to match the action of a film. Watch sections of the film in small groups and use objects, voices and percussion to create ambient sound.

### Enterprise

A film star is coming to visit your community. What would you need to arrange to ensure they had an enjoyable visit? What would you want them to see? Would you want them to help you with something?



## Weblinks

**<http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk>**

Heritage website containing hundreds of pictures of Scottish cinemas and theatres

**<http://earlycinema.gla.ac.uk>**

Web resource on early cinema in Scotland, produced by researchers at the University of Glasgow

**<http://www.screenonline.org.uk>**

Informative website created by the British Film Institute on the history of British films and cinemagoing

**<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/cinemas.pdf>**

Spotlight on Scotland's cinemas (Historic Scotland) – illustrated leaflet exploring the architecture of cinemas in Scotland

**<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfa/researchandarticles/earlyfilmindex>**

Information on Bioscope Shows and early film on the National Fairground Archive website

**<http://filmarchives.org.uk/filmarchiveforum/fafimages/DangersofCNfilmLeaflet.pdf>**

The dangers of cellulose nitrate film (Film Archives UK) – leaflet explaining the dangers of nitrate film stock and what to do with it

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