

# FORGOTTEN SILVER

Written and directed by COSTA BOTES and PETER JACKSON




Forgotten Silver was produced in 1995

This New Zealand Film Study Guide was written by Cynthia Thomas, who has 20 years' teaching experience. It has been designed as a starting point for teachers who wish to put together a unit based on Forgotten Silver.

There are currently five New Zealand Film Study Guides available - An Angel At My Table, Forgotten Silver, Goodbye Pork Pie, Ngati, Sleeping Dogs. More titles are planned for 2003.

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WINGNUT FILMS in association with the NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION and NEW ZEALAND ON AIR presents FORGOTTEN SILVER with PETER JACKSON and COSTA BOTES • Cinematographer ALLUN BOLLINGER and GERRY VASBENTER • Narrator JEFFREY THOMAS • Editors ERIC DE BEUS and MICHAEL HORTON • Original Music DAVE DONALDSON, STEVE ROCHE and JANET RODDICK Production Designer JOHN GIRDLESTONE • Script Consultant FRANCES WALSH • Executive Producers JAMIE SELKIRK and PETER JACKSON • Producer SUE ROGERS • Written and Directed by PETER JACKSON and COSTA BOTES

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NEW ZEALAND FILM STUDY GUIDE

The following are activities based on the achievement objectives presented in the Ministry of Education document "English in the New Zealand Curriculum".



WRITTEN LANGUAGE

**WRITING poetic**

- > Write a series of diary entries as Colin McKenzie, or Maybelle, or Hannah.
- > Write the last letter Colin might have written home to Hannah.
- > Write an imaginative plot summary of The Warrior Season.

**WRITING expressive**

**RESPONSE**  
Write down your feelings in response to the following statements or questions. You may refer to both the film and your own experiences.

- > How did the film make you feel while you were watching it?
- > What is the relevance of the title?
- > Does the film present you with fact or opinion (an objective or subjective view, reality or a constructed reality)?
- > Forgotten Silver is a convincing mockumentary
- > Making a mockumentary is a silly idea.
- > There are many examples of humour in this film.
- > You can learn a great deal about documentary making by watching Forgotten Silver.
- > Documentaries are constructed realities, not necessarily the truth.
- > Keeping in mind that documentaries are constructed realities, what other angle could Forgotten Silver have taken?
- > What is the difference between imitation and parody? Which path do you think that Peter Jackson and Costa Botes have taken?
- > Why do you think Peter Jackson and Costa Botes made this film?

**WRITING transactional**

- > Write two reviews of the film for a magazine – the first a review of the film as documentary, the second a review of the film as mockumentary.
- > Design a tourist brochure based on a Forgotten Silver tour.
- > Using information from the film, write an entry about Colin McKenzie for a book on famous New Zealanders.
- > Write a pamphlet for trainee screen writers about how to construct a successful documentary.
- > Cut out a newspaper article that you think has potential as a topic for a documentary. Make up any additional information you need. Write a brief outline of that documentary.

Research one of the following topics (all related to the film). Try using the KWL format

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WHAT I KNOW	WHAT I WANT TO KNOW	WHAT I LEARNED

**TOPICS**  
Peter Jackson • Costa Botes • Richard Pearse  
The Wright brothers • Leonard Maltin • Sam Neill  
Charlie Chaplin • Salome • John O'Shea  
The Academy Awards • Reviews of Forgotten Silver  
Algiers • Stalin • History of NZ film • Heatstroke  
Tahiti • Gordon Coates • Spanish Civil War • Wall Street Crash  
NZ of the 1920s/30s • Gallipoli • Ancient Jerusalem

CORAL LANGUAGE

These texts may be useful :  
Cairns, B. & Martin, H. Shadows on the Wall – A Study of Seven NZ Feature Films, Longman Paul, Auckland 1994. Horrocks, R. On Film II, Heinemann, Auckland 1980. Partridge, D. & Hughes, P. Flicks – Studying Film as Text, OUP, Australia 1992.

Write a newspaper article about the stolen eggs or Buller incidents, or an article headlined Smut Charges Brought.

**PERSONAL reading**

Read and review a biography / autobiography about a famous New Zealander – for example, Teacher by Sylvia Ashton-Warner; To the Is-land, An Angel At My Table, An Envoy To The Mirror City by Janet Frame; Frank Sargeson – A Life by Michael King.

Close Reading - See VIEWING tasks.

**SPEAKING / LISTENING interpersonal**

**CLASS DISCUSSION**  
What is a documentary?  
Groups brainstorm the purposes of documentary (eg to discuss, explain, inform, persuade etc) and write their own definitions, which are then displayed for the class.

**CONTINUUM**  
(before revealing that Forgotten Silver is a mockumentary.)  
A your teacher calls out the following statements, physically place students on a continuum, from strongly disagree, through neutral, to strongly agree. For each statement, pair up with someone who disagrees with your stand. Discuss your viewpoint with that person.

- STATEMENTS**
- Colin McKenzie was a genius.
  - Peter Jackson is a genius.
  - This documentary is convincing.
  - All New Zealanders should watch this documentary.

**Circle Talk:** Students form two circles with equal numbers. One stands inside the other, facing outward. The outer circle face the middle. Students talk to each other on various topics for a preset time, before one circle moves clockwise, so that all students experience a series of partners with whom to share their thoughts. Topics might include

- I was amazed that ....
- I was disturbed that ....
- I laughed when ....
- It was tragic when ....
- The end of the film was ....
- The things I learned were ....

**Constructed Reality:** In groups, on a sheet divided in two, brainstorm how a documentary maker could present your town or city in a positive or negative light. Together, write two different, persuasive commentaries (voice-overs) for those alternative documentaries.

**SPEAKING / LISTENING using Text**

In pairs, script an interview with Colin McKenzie or another character mentioned in the film, exploring their motivation, then present it.

VISUAL LANGUAGE

**PRESENTING**

- > Design a poster advertising the film.
- > Design a collage representing one or more important ideas in the film.
- > Storyboard a promotional preview for Forgotten Silver.
- > Design a new logo for Majestic Lion Pictures.

Write an outline for your own mockumentary. Include an introduction which outlines the topic to be covered, an outline of the content of the documentary, and a discussion of your proposed target audience, the effect you want to have on your audience and how you might attempt to achieve this.

Storyboard a sequence from your mockumentary. Include an interview (with associated film techniques eg: cutaways, still shots and soundtrack).

**VIEWING (and Close Reading)**

Following teacher instructions, storyboard a section of the film in groups. Discuss with your group what you think your storyboard shows about documentary making, and the effect the documentary maker wanted to achieve in your chosen sequence.

**READING FILM**  
Answer these questions. Find evidence from the film to back up what you say.

- STRUCTURE**
- > How is this documentary structured (eg chronologically? revolving around an issue / person / event?)
  - > Is repetition used? When? Why?
  - > Is a narrator used? What is the nature and effect of that commentary?
  - > Are interviews used? With whom? Why? Effect?
  - > Is there a climax / climaxes in this documentary? When? How are film shots and sound used to emphasise these points or crisis or action?
  - > Is use made of dramatic reconstruction / stills / historical footage? When? Why?
  - > Are the opening and closing sequences important? Why?
  - > How is the documentary paced?

**AUDIENCE**

- > Who do you think is the target audience? Why? (you could mention subject, theme, relevance).
- > What effect do you think the documentary makers would like their film to have on the audience?

**FILM TECHNIQUE**

- > What types of shot are commonly used, and why?
- > Does lighting play a role in emphasising the content / theme of the film?
- > How important is sound (background noise, music) in adding to the emotional impact of the film?

**STYLE**

- > What is the tone of the film?
- > What do you think is the purpose of the film (ie what values do you think the film shows or reinforces or criticises / challenges, and why)?
- > Is this a fair documentary? Discuss.

OR use these questions as the basis of a jigsaw group exercise. Groups discuss and make notes on their allocated questions. New groups are then formed, with at least one member of each previous group as members. Individuals then tutor the rest of the group about their original topic.

Close view an interview sequence from the film. Write the questions you think would have been asked to get those interview responses.

IN GROUPS, COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING 3 LEVEL GUIDE:

**Level 1 : Reading On The Lines**  
Tick the statements which focus on what the film makers show in this film. When you've made your decisions, discuss your reasons with your group.

- Colin McKenzie made a film projector.
- Colin McKenzie filmed Richard Pearse flying.
- Colin McKenzie invented colour film.
- Colin McKenzie invented sound in films.
- Colin McKenzie died in the Spanish Civil War.

**Level 2 : Reading Between The Lines**  
Tick statements which you think mean what the film makers meant in this film. Discuss your choices with your group and be prepared to justify them.

- We should try to get international recognition for this outstanding New Zealand film maker.
- Reality can be constructed on screen.
- There is humour in parody.
- Certain aspects of documentaries can be ridiculous.
- Tragedy can inspire genius.

**Level 3 : Reading Beyond The Lines**  
Tick the statements which you think the film makers would support. Be ready to give your reasons when you discuss your choices.

- It is important to be a critical viewer.
- It is important that we all realise that reality can be constructed on screen.
- The average viewer can be easily fooled.
- Propaganda can be powerful.
- We should build a statue to Colin McKenzie.

Make a biographical timeline of important events in the life of Colin McKenzie OR  
Design a plot graph showing the crises / important points in the story of Colin McKenzie.

