

RAIN



New Zealand Film Study Guide

The following activities are based on the achievement objectives in the New Zealand English curriculum. They may provide a starting point for teachers wishing to design a unit based on the film.

**Rose Road and Comunicado in association with the New Zealand Film Commission present a
Christine Jeffes film Rain starring Alicia Fulford-Wierzbicki, Sarah Peirse, Marton Csokas,
Alistair Browning & Aaron Murphy Casting Diana Rowan Costume Designer Kirsty Cameron
Art Director Kirsty Clayton Line Producer Judith Trye Editor Paul Maxwell
Cinematographer John Toon Music composed and produced by Neil Finn and Edmund McWilliams
Screenplay Christine Jeffs from the novel Rain by Kirsty Gunn Associate Producer John Toon
Executive Producer Robin Scholes Producer Philippa Campbell Director Christine Jeffs**

Writing Poetic

1 Poem

Before viewing the film, as a class, brainstorm a list of words suggested by the word, “rain”, or have each student contribute an adjective, noun, verb and adverb to a box. Pull the words out randomly and list on the board. Students use these words (or forms of them) in the given order, to write a poem.

2 Poem

Follow the same process after viewing the film, brainstorming a list of words suggested by images in the film. Compare the mood of the two poems.

3 Diary Entries

Write diary entries as Janey at certain points in the film. Or write a letter from Janey about her holiday (before the end of the film) to a school friend.

4 Conversation: Imagine that Janey meets Cady ten years later. Write the conversation that might take place.

5 Report: Write Janey's school report showing aspects of her personality you can identify in the film.

6 Prose: Rewrite your favourite scene as a piece of prose. Compare your piece with the matching section from Kirsty Gunn's novel, “Rain”.

7 Interior Monologue: Choose one scene from the film. Write an interior monologue showing what a character might have been thinking at that time.

8 Point-of-view: The story is told subjectively, through the eyes of 12 year old Janey. Choose a scene and retell it from the perspective of another character.

9 Cady's boat is called the “Brenda L”. In pairs, decide why he named the boat, then share your ideas with others.



Writing Expressive

1 Response

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

2 'It is difficult to like these people' (review by “The Wolf”)

3 'You might call this a rites-of-passage, except there's nothing at the end, no message of hope Only the long drive home' (ibid.).

4 This film captures “the great New Zealand childhood holiday”. How does the film achieve this?

5 This is ‘a story not only of sexual blossoming but also of the three Ds: disintegration, destruction and death’ (Angela Walker, “Pavement” Oct 2001).

6 This film is about loss and disintegration – the loss and disintegration of love and innocence.

7 ‘Almost as important as the actors in the movie was the role of the landscape, which acted as a metaphor for the experiences of the characters’ (Hannah Dickson, “She”, Sept 2001).

8 ‘Rain first sparkles like the bright blue sea and warm summer nights in the glow of fairy lights, then crumbles under bruised bourbon-colored skies’ .

9 Some reviewers have commented on the foreboding atmosphere in this film. There are many examples of foreshadowing in Kirsty Gunn's novel. Write about some examples from the film.

10 Do you feel any sympathy for Kate? Why/why not? Kirsty Gunn writes, in her novel, ‘really she was no different from anyone else. She was alone too. Scared at how life turns out and with nothing left to do about it. The future wasted and only the past now, rolling up from behind’ (Chapter Two). Comment on this quote. Comment on Kate's statements from the film – ‘It would be nice ... being that free’, ‘Everything's in front of you now, not me’.

11 Janey says, ‘What's endurance? It's holding on. Holding on’. To what is she referring? Is life just a matter of endurance?

12 In her novel, Kirsty Gunn writes, ‘All children are powerless against the adults who surround them. We turn from them, set our mouths, but still our soft milk bones yield’ (Chapter Two). Comment on this quote in relation to the film.

13 One theme of the film is that what seems ordinary can lead to the extraordinary. Little seems to happen, but the ‘intimation of overwhelming dread is palpable in every scene’ (A. O. Scott, “New York Times”, April 2002).

- 14 'The film is, in some ways, a furious indictment of those adults whose self-absorption and neglect leave their children exposed to moral and psychological peril' (ibid.).
- 15 'The visual beauty of the film, rather than distracting from the troubling story, makes it more troubling still' (ibid.).
- 16 The film has an 'ominous tone and the sense of a moment being replayed and replayed in the memory until it takes on the quality of myth, developing a grim inevitability and an almost supernatural logic' (Philip Matthews, "New Zealand Listener", Oct 2001).
- 17 This film is set in the 1970s. Do you think anything would be different if it had been set in the 21st century? Attempt to explain this film's censor's rating.

Writing Transactional

- 1 Write a review of the film for a magazine.
- 2 Write the newspaper article following Jimmy's death.
- 3 Write a psychologist's report on one of the main characters.
- 4 Research one of the following topics (all related to the film). Try using the KWL format.

What I Know	What I Want To Know	What I Learned

Personal Reading

Read the source for this film, the novel "Rain" by Kirsty Gunn. Compare the book with the film.

Read and comment on literature that focuses on dysfunctional families / relationships, such as "The God Boy", by Ian Cross; "The Catcher in the Rye", by J. D. Salinger; or about the loss of innocence, such as "The End of the Golden Weather", by Bruce Mason.

Read about film, or reviews of this particular film. References made in this study guide, and other texts which may be useful, are listed below.

References

- Cairns, B & Martin, H: Shadows on the Wall – A Study of Seven New Zealand Feature Films, Longman Paul, Auckland 1994.
- Dennis, J. & Bieringa, J. (Eds): Film in Aotearoa New Zealand, Victoria University Press, Wellington 1996.
- Horrocks, R: On Film, Heinemann, Auckland 1980.
- IPL Books: Celluloid Dreams – A Century of Film in New Zealand, IPL Books, Wellington 1997.
- Martin, H. & Edwards, S: New Zealand Film 1912 – 1996, Oxford University Press, Auckland 1997.
- Partridge, D. & Hughes, P: Flicks – Studying Film as Text, Oxford University Press, Australia 1992.

Reviews

www.rainthemovie.com
www.iofilm.uk/fm/r/rain
rottentomatoes.com/m/rain



Speaking/listening/ Interpersonal/Using Text

1 Continuum

As your teacher calls out the following statements, physically place yourself 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.

2 Statements:

- I cannot relate to events shown in this film.
- This film is moving – it has emotional force.
- The good outweighs the bad in this film.
- This film has messages for us.
- The most evil character in this film is the weather.
- I have good memories of my childhood holidays.
- Characters like Janey don't exist in the 21st century.
- You ought to have to sit a licence to be a parent.
- This film is unobtrusive.
- Adultery is a sin.
- This film had no plot.
- This film is timeless – it is of an era but is still relevant to today's world.
- In groups, brainstorm what makes this film especially “New Zealand”. Bring your ideas back to the class.
- In small groups, script and present a marriage guidance session that Janey's parents might have attended.
- In small groups, script and present Janey or Jim's possible session with their school counsellor.
- In pairs, script an interview with a main character exploring their motivation, and present it.

3 Circle Talk

Students form two circles with equal numbers. One stands inside the other, facing outward. The outer circle face the middle. Pairs talk to each other on a given topic 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

- My favourite part of the film was . . .
- My least favourite part of the film . . .
- I thought the character . . . was . . .
- I thought . . . was the best actor because . . .
- The things I learned were . . .
- Script and present a talk show episode with the characters from the film as guests.
- Prepare a reading from Kirsty Gunn's, “Rain”, and read it to the class.
- Write another ending for the film and read it to the class.

4 Character

In groups, on a large sheet of paper draw around a group member to create an outline of a major character. Inside the body, brainstorm and write down all the words you can think of to describe that character's personality. Inside and around the head area, brainstorm and write down all the words you can think of to describe that character's feelings. Outside the body, brainstorm and write down all the external influences on that character. Pin your sheet to the wall for others to read and comment on.

Presenting

- 1 Design a poster advertising the film.
- 2 Design a collage representing one or more important ideas in the film.
- 3 Design two different pictures/collages, one as Janey and one as Jimmy, done during their holiday, which clearly show their different ages/attitudes.
- 4 Design a tourist brochure for the area in which this film is set.
- 5 Design a poster or leaflet promoting water safety.
- 6 Storyboard a promotional preview for “Rain”.
- 7 Design a symbol for one of the main characters.
- 8 Be prepared to explain it.
- 9 Design a diagram that shows Janey's attempts to journey towards adulthood.



Viewing and Close Reading

- 1 Stop the film soon after the start and predict what might happen; stop the film at various points and predict what might happen; stop the film just before the end and predict what might happen.
- 2 View a sequence then discuss the design – clothes/hairstyles/décor etc and its importance to your understanding of the film.
- 3 Choose a shot and freeze it. Explain what and how information is conveyed.
- 4 Sequencing: in groups, write each of a series of important plot incidents on cards. Practise putting them in order. Practise putting the cards of other groups in order.
- 5 **Jigsaw Groups**
In groups, take one of the following topics then re-view the film, taking notes and discussing your findings. Re-group so that each new group member has different expertise. Teach your new group about your topic.

Topics

- Symbolism [eg the weather (reflecting events, characters); showering/water (cleansing, transformation); sense of things being beached; colour (exaggerated to intensify a scene, mirroring character's personalities/emotions, naturalistic, use of black and white to show fantasy); Cady's boat; visual motifs (eg push mower, bach, sunscreen, boatsheds, cane deckchairs, beach landscape suggest emotions)].
- Sound (eg music as metaphor; mood music; songs that comment on the action or theme); dialogue (eg minimal, overlaid with significance, irony).
- Film Techniques (eg types of shot and their purpose; series of cuts indicating mood change; slow motion).
- Themes (eg that the ordinary can be extraordinary; that appearances can belie the reality; that parents' actions can have an impact on their children; that adolescence is a difficult time).
- Setting (eg 1970s New Zealand is clearly depicted; setting as metaphor).

Reading Film

- View the sequences listed, then answer the questions that follow:

The “joys of childhood” sequences, from the shot of the long drop to the shot of Jim running out of shot (approximately 1 minute), and from the shot of Jim running along the beach while Janey swims to the shot of the pair walking towards the boat (approximately 35 seconds).

- The “last day” sequences, from the shot of the beach to the shot of Jim walking away (approximately 1 _ minutes), and from the shots of Jim in his cape to the shot of the sunset (approximately 30 seconds).
- “The Return” sequence, from the shot of Janey calling, “Jim”, to the black screen shot (approximately 3 minutes 15 seconds).

Questions

- 6 What mood/emotion is evoked by the sequence?
- 7 How has the film maker evoked mood/emotion through:
 - sound?
 - dialogue?
 - setting?
 - types/angle/duration of shots?
 - editing?
- 8 Is there any obvious message for the viewer?



Level 1 : Reading on the lines

In groups, complete the following 3 Level Guide. Tick the statements which focus on what the film maker shows in this film. When you've made your decisions, discuss your reasons with your group.

- Kate drinks a lot.
- Kate and Ed dislike their children.
- The beach is a charming place to holiday.
- Janey is growing up.
- Jimmy is innocent.
- Stress between their parents leads to stress in the children.
- Janey acts responsibly.

Level 2 : Reading between the lines

Tick statements which you think mean what the film maker meant in this film. Discuss your choices with your group and be prepared to justify them.

- Kate's drinking is the result of an unhappy marriage.
- Janey and Jimmy are left to their own devices because their parents are caught up in their own dramas and emotions.
- Seemingly harmless little things can build up to become very important.
- Things were different in the seventies.
- Women are often to blame for marriage break ups.
- It was Janey's fault that Jimmy drowned.
- It was Kate and Ed's fault that Jimmy drowned.

Level 3 : Reading beyond the lines

Tick the statements which you think the film maker would support. Be ready to give your reasons when you discuss your choices.

- Communication is necessary for a marriage to succeed.
- Parents should not neglect their children.
- Women who have affairs are selfish.
- There is more to sex than the sexual act.
- It is possible to make a "timeless" film.
- People often try to mask their true selves and lives.
- Beach holidays are dangerous.

From the level 3 section, have students put the chosen statements in a chart, like the one below. Fill in the right hand side with evidence from the film.

Statement	Evidence (Quote or Explanation)
Parents should not neglect their children.	Sarah and Ed ...

Further information

Rain was produced in 2001 and was selected at Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in the same year. It is available in New Zealand on DVD.

Rain is distributed by Magna Pacific in New Zealand and is available at all good DVD retailers. It is available online at: www.realgroovy.co.nz www.gumboot.co.nz www.arovideo.co.nz

This guide was written for New Zealand Film by Cynthia Thomas, who has 23 years teaching experience.
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NEW ZEALAND FILM

TE TUMU WHAKAATA TAONGA