

A Film By Vincent Ward

River Queen



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.

SILVERSCREEN FILMS AND THE FILM CONSORTIUM IN ASSOCIATION WITH ENDGAME ENTERTAINMENT
 NEW ZEALAND FILM PRODUCTION FUND NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION
 THE UK FILM COUNCIL CAPITAL PICTURES AND WAYWARD FILMS PRESENT A FILM BY VINCENT WARD SAMANTHA MORTON
 KIEFER SUTHERLAND CLIFF CURTIS TEMUERA MORRISON ANTON LESSER RAWIRI PENE STEPHEN REA "RIVER QUEEN"
 NZ CASTING DIRECTOR DIANA ROWAN MUSIC BY KARL JENKINS COSTUME DESIGNER BARBARA DARRAGH EDITOR EWA J LIND
 PRODUCTION DESIGNER RICK KOFOED 2nd UNIT DIRECTOR PAUL GRINDER CO-PRODUCERS TAINUI STEPHENS AND RICHARD FLETCHER
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GEOFF DIXON NEIL PELOW JAMES D. STERN ERIC WATSON MARK HOTCHIN
 FROM AN ORIGINAL STORY BY VINCENT WARD SCREENPLAY BY VINCENT WARD AND TOA FRASER PRODUCED BY DON REYNOLDS AND CHRIS AUTY
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ALUN BOLLINGER DIRECTED BY VINCENT WARD

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Poetic Writing

- 1 Brainstorm a list of words suggested by the opening sequences of the film then compose a poem using those words in a set order.
- 2 Write an alternative ending for the film.
- 3 Write the diary entry as one of the main characters, twenty years on.
- 4 Write a letter home to extended family in Ireland from Sarah, describing the 1854 frontier garrison.
- 5 Write a letter from Sarah to her sister at the time the film ends.
- 6 Write Private Doyle's diary, making his feelings for Sarah clear.
- 7 Sarah trailed Rangī for 7 years. In pairs, brainstorm and write a story that is an account of an episode that might have taken place during those years.
- 8 Rewrite your favourite scene as a piece of prose.



*Sarah (Samantha Morton) and Wiremu (Cliff Curtis)
in River Queen. Photo: Kirsty Griffin*

Expressive Writing

- 1 Have students keep a journal recording their personal response to the film at various points in its progression.
- 2 Have students write responses to statements/questions starters.

Sample statements/questions/starters:

- I learned something from watching this film.
- I was amazed when/that
- The atmosphere at the beginning of the film
- You could tell that Sarah loved her son dearly by
- Explain the title of the film.
- The action scenes in the film were
- What do you think are the most touching scenes in the film? Why?
- Which scenes do you think are the most exciting? Why?
- Explain this film's censor's rating.
- Explain the importance of setting.
- If the main characters in this film were to be represented by a colour, what would those colours be, and why?
- Which characters would be most and least likely to be your friend, and why?
- Does Sarah leaving her locket have any significance?
- What do you think makes a home a home? What makes a home a home for Sarah?
- Sarah says, about her diary, 'That having written it down you might better understand (the story of your life)'. Do you agree? Write a diary entry on something about which you feel strongly and would be willing to share.
- Explain the statement, 'In this remote land it was difficult to see the enemy'.
- Do you think that Te Kai Po avoids a 'river of blood' on purpose? Why?
- Sarah initially says that a tattoo 'marks you for life', but Boy thinks that it 'marks who you are'. What do you think? Why did Sarah change her mind?
- This film is a masterpiece. Discuss.
- This film is visually magnificent. Discuss.
- What does the use of the voice over add to the film?
- What does the use of subtitles add to the film?
- Choose one word you think describes this film (eg realistic, electrifying, satisfying, epic, thought-provoking) and explain why you have chosen this word.

- The ending of this film is satisfying. Discuss.
- What do you think music adds to this film?
- Private Doyle says, 'You have to fight for what's in your heart, Sarah'. Do you agree? What do you think is worth fighting for? What do Sarah, Private Doyle, Rangi, Boy and Wiremu each think is worth fighting for? Do their opinions change as the film progresses?

Transactional Writing

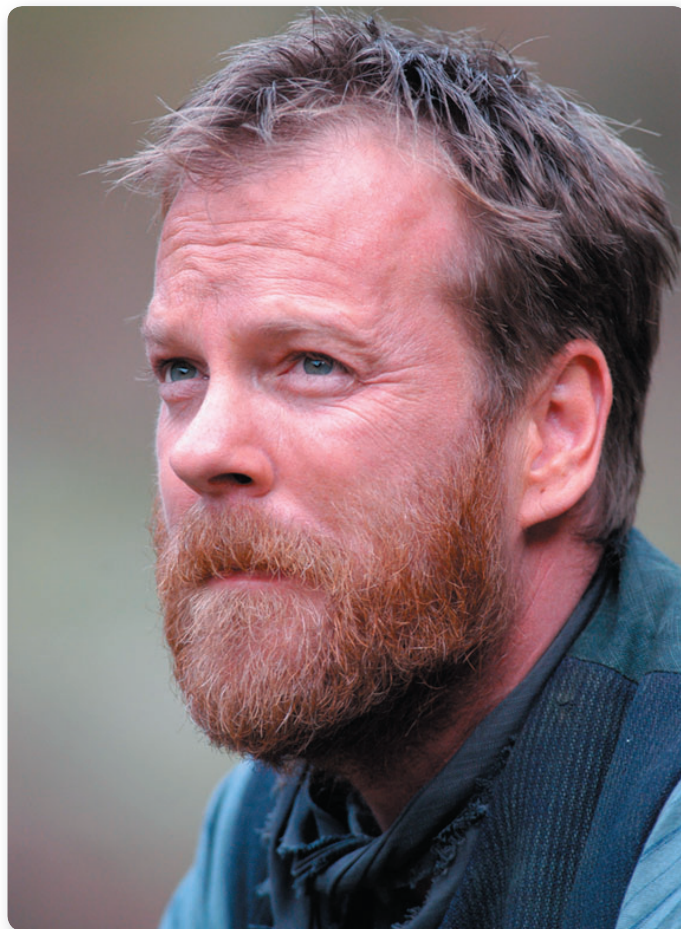
- 1 Research and write an encyclopaedia entry or tourist brochure about the Whanganui River.
- 2 Research an aspect of the land wars and present your findings in diagram form.
- 3 Research and write a leaflet for visitors to New Zealand about New Zealand history, or about Maori customs.
- 4 Write a situations vacant advertisement for Mr Doyle's position.
- 5 As a class, brainstorm what you think are important ideas presented in this film, then write an essay about the film's themes.

Scaffold the process, possibly by:

- brainstorming ideas.
- giving topic sentences.
- having students decide on supporting examples and quotes in pairs or groups.

Example – ideas, topic sentences, examples and quotes:

Ideas	Topic Sentences	Examples	Quotes
It is important to fight for what you believe in.	This film highlights the idea of the importance of fighting for what you believe in.	Sarah sacrifices everything to fight for her son. Rangi fights to retain land and culture for his people.	"You have to fight for what's in your heart, Sarah". 'There was only room in my heart for boy'. 'Our people bleed'.
It is vital to your cultural identity that you know where you belong.	Additionally, we are presented with the idea that...	Boy gains strength by knowing his roots. Sarah feels that she does not belong when she returns to the main garrison at Castlecliff.	'I would die because I know where I belong'. 'This is all wrong. Everything is wrong'.
There are sometimes difficult choices to be made in life – being human means having the ability to adapt.	Also presented in the film is the idea that...	Sarah makes the choice to stay and fight for her son. Te Kai Po knows the importance of adapting to survive in a changing world, and consciously makes that choice.	'Adapt or die'. 'In this remote land it was difficult to see the enemy'.



Private Doyle (Kiefer Sutherland) in River Queen
Photo: Ken George

- 6 **Precis/Paraphrase/Summarise** – write a 1 minute plot summary to be read aloud at a school assembly to promote the lunchtime showing of this film. Try reducing your plot summary to 30 seconds, then 20, then 10.
- 7 After studying the language of reviews, write a review of this film for a teenage magazine.
- 8 Write a series of character cards describing aspects of a character's personality. Swap them with someone else and practise identifying the character based on the description.
- 9 Write down some questions that you would like to ask the director of this film. Explain why each of your questions is important.

10 **Sequencing**

Decide on a certain number of important plot/story points then write them in a flow diagram. Change one event in the diagram, then rewrite it after that point.

11 **Clines**

Give students two “extreme” words, one of which is related to the film. Students then (possibly with the help of each other, a dictionary or a thesaurus) fill in the middle with words that fit on a continuum between these poles, being prepared to justify their choices.

Sample Words:

<i>atmospheric</i>	<i>dull</i>
<i>segregate</i>	<i>assimilate</i>
<i>submissive</i>	<i>aggressive</i>
<i>passionate</i>	<i>passionless</i>

- 12 Use the KWL format to quickly research a topic related to the film.

Example KWL Format:

What I Know	What I Want To Know	What I Learned

Possible Topics – Vincent Ward, Toa Fraser, Don Reynolds, Alun Bollinger, Samantha Morton, Kiefer Sutherland, Anton Lesser, Stephen Rea, Cliff Curtis, Temuera Morrison (or any of the actors), Whanganui River, Land Wars, Maori warfare strategies, Maori customs, 1860s New Zealand.

Speaking and Listening/ Interpersonal and Using Text

- 1 In groups, after discussion, come to a consensus and assign each of the following adjectives to none or one or more characters. Justify your choices to another group. Add other suitable adjectives to the list.

Adjective List:

brave, loving, stubborn, strong, weak, hurt, humorous, lively, introverted, quiet, noisy, likeable, wily, unyielding, wise, excitable, vicious, dutiful, rebellious, surly, happy, thoughtful, intelligent, unforgiving, forgiving, optimistic, pessimistic, independent, fun-loving, extroverted, sad, angry, helpful, argumentative, tactful

- 2 In pairs, write out quiz cards using the 5 w's + h (who, when, why, what, where and how) then quiz another couple. Eg:
 - **Who** is the most interesting character?
 - **When** did Sarah decide to stay up river?
 - **What** are the most important decisions made by characters in the film?
 - **Where** is the film set?
 - **How** does Sarah react to Boy's kidnapping?
- 3 In pairs or groups, script and present an interview with a character, exploring their motivation.
- 4 Write down quotes on separate cards. Swap them with someone else and practise identifying the character who said it, what was happening at the time, and what happened before and after the words were uttered.
- 5 Before watching the film listen as your teacher plays you part of the soundtrack. Write a piece based on the feeling you get from the music.



Director Vincent Ward

- 6 As one of the film's characters, write and present a monologue in which you give your views on life, your views/emotions about things that happened to you and the people in your life and how you changed or learned something during the course of the film.
- 7 As old Rangi, explain why you took Boy, or as Wiremu explain your allegiances.
- 8 **Continuum**
Teacher reads out a series of statements one by one. Students physically place themselves on a continuum from strongly agree through neutral to strongly disagree, then discuss viewpoints.
 - Knowing your family history is important to your sense of identity.
 - I felt emotional at times during this film
 - Places have a spirit.
 - The scene when... was the best part of this film.
 - The appeal of this film is universal.
 - I would strongly recommend this film.
- 9 Inside-Outside Circles – Students stand in two circles facing each other. Teacher poses a question or makes a statement. Students discuss with their partner for a set time (eg 1 minute), then rotate to a new partner for the next question.

Sample Questions:

- What was your favourite part of the film?
 - How did the film start, and what did you think of the start of the film?
 - How did the film end, and what did you think of the end of the film?
 - Who was your favourite character? Why?
 - What did you think were the most exciting parts of the film?
 - What did you think were the most moving parts of the film?
 - What were you feeling when the film ended?
- 10 Jeopardy – Teacher gives an answer, then students (individually or in pairs or groups) write the question.

Sample Answers:

colonialism, moko, 1860's, 7 years, Major Bains, Castlecliff, love, treachery.

- 11 Picture Dictation – Have students draw in a series of frames as the teacher reads about some aspect of the film for example, a story summary. Students then attempt to “read” their picture summary to a partner.
- 12 Panel – Have students write “viewer” questions for major characters or someone involved in making the film. Decide on a show host and a panel. Hold a panel discussion based on the questions.



Sarah (Samantha Morton) in burning village, in River Queen
Photo: Kirsty Griffin

- 13 Collocation Exercise – Have students group words (each written on a slip of paper), then justify their groupings.

Sample Words:

director, producer, cinematographer, writer, beliefs, spirit, whakapapa, passion, Ireland, Castlecliff, Whanganui River, New Zealand, atmosphere, haunting, primordial, challenging, passionate, stubborn, determined, spirited, fade, dissolve, slow motion, close up

- 14 Consensus – Give a list of statements, then have individual students arrange them in order of importance. Students form groups and try to come to a consensus. Class tries to come to a consensus.

Sample Statements:

- The most important thing in a good film is the script.
- The most important thing in a good film is the director.
- The most important thing in a good film is the acting.
- The most important thing in a good film is the cinematographer.
- The most important things in a good film are the special effects.

15 Anonymous Letterbox

What ideas did this film highlight for you? Students scribble answers to a question such as this on slips of paper which are boxed and pulled out to be discussed (in pairs, groups, or as a class).

16 Response Grid

Group students. Give each group member a colour. Call out a grid reference and a colour, eg. "blue B2". Student responds to their group according to the grid. Example:

	A	B	C	D
1	Sound effect why were you used?	Film shot, why were you used?	Voice over, explain your purpose.	Setting, explain your relevance.
2	Cliff Curtis, why did you accept this role?	Vincent Ward, why did you make this film?	Minor character, why are you relevant?	River Queen, why are you the title?
3	Exciting scene, what are you about?	Opening, what do you teach the viewer?	Closing scene, why are you effective?	Why are you a scene that could have been left out?
4	Word, passionate, are you relevant?	Word, moving, are you relevant?	Word, determined, are you relevant?	Word, uplifting, are you relevant?

17 Three Level Guide

Use three level guides to promote discussion and comprehension. In groups, students tick statements they believe to be true, discussing to prepare a justification for their choices.

Example:

Reading on the Lines

Tick the statements which show what the film maker shows in this film. Be ready to give your reasons.

- The environment shown in this film is hostile.
- Sarah is brave.
- Te Kai Po is not a clever campaigner.
- Major Bains is a warm and considerate character.
- This film shows Sarah learning about herself, about others and about life.

Reading Between the Lines

Tick statements which you think mean what the film maker meant in this film. Be ready to give your reasons.

- People can make the same choices for different reasons.
- Te Kai Po is motivated by greed.
- Boy was unfeeling.
- Some battles have to be fought.
- Without a cultural identity you are lost.

Reading Beyond the Lines

Tick the statements which you think the film maker would support. Be prepared to give your reasons.

- The sacrifices involved in making a major film are worth it.
- New Zealand history should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.
- It is important to passionate about what you believe in.
- People are shaped by their environment.
- Passion is an important part of being human.



Boy (Rawiri Pene) in canoe with Maori Warriors, in River Queen
Photo: Kirsty Griffin

Presenting

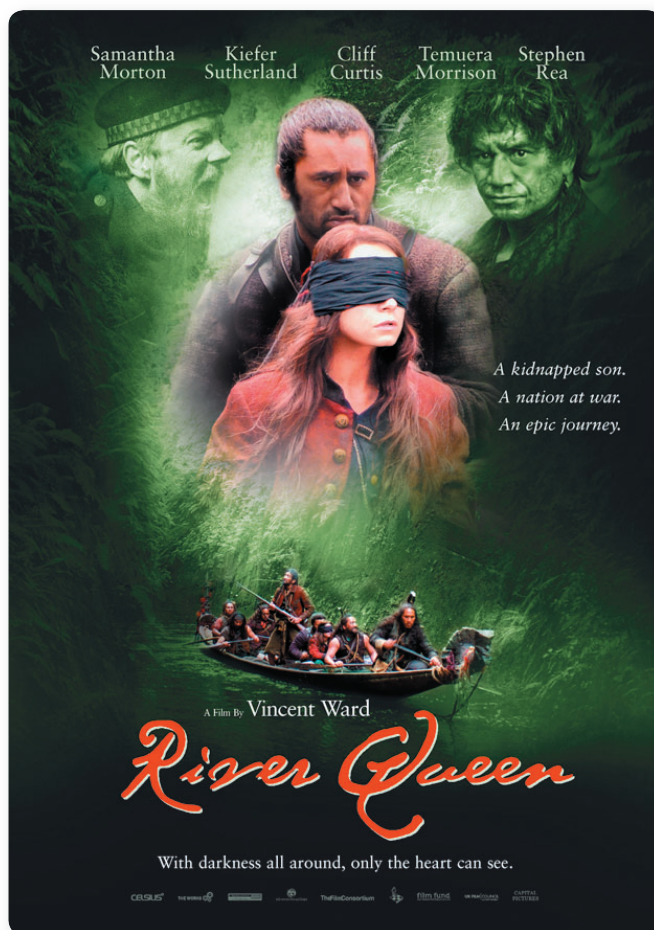
- 1 Storyboard a promotional preview for “River Queen”.
- 2 After studying static images
 - Design a static image showing Sarah’s life journey, with the river as its focal point.
 - Design a static image showing an important idea in the film.
 - Design a poster advertising the film.
 - Design a suitable invitation to a viewing of this film.
 - Design a symbol for one of the characters. Be prepared to explain it.
 - Design two different “doodles” as two different characters, then see if others can identify which characters drew them.
 - Design a static image using only two or three colours, any number of shapes or symbols, and one of the following quotes to highlight an important idea in the film. On the back, write why you have chosen the quote, colours and shapes that you have, and explain what and why you would have included in your image had you been given greater choice.

Possible Quotes:

- ‘You have to fight for what’s in your heart’.
- ‘There was only room in my heart for Boy’.
- ‘Our people bleed’.
- A moko ‘marks who you are’.
- ‘it’s not our war’.
- ‘What had I done? I had healed the chief who would kill my people’.
- ‘This is all wrong. Everything is wrong’.
- ‘I would die because I know where I belong’.
- ‘You draw the enemy to us like a light’.
- ‘In this remote land it was difficult to see the enemy’.
- ‘Some fought against the colonists whilst some fought for them believing alliance was the best strategy for retaining their land’.
- ‘it often helped to write down your troubles’.
- ‘river of blood’.

Viewing

- 1 Re-watch a scene that you think is particularly effective. Storyboard the scene according to teacher instruction. Explain why you think the scene is effective.
- 2 Before viewing the film, watch the opening sequence without the sound. Discuss what is happening and what would be appropriate sound. Watch the sequence with the sound. Discuss what sound adds to the film.
- 3 Re-watch the opening sequences of the film. Brainstorm all the things you learn.
- 4 View a sequence then discuss the design and its importance to your understanding of the film.
- 5 Choose a shot and freeze it. Explain what and how information is conveyed.



New Zealand “campaign” poster

6 Prediction

Stop the film at pre-chosen points.
Predict what you think will happen next. Justify.

7 Closing sequence

Re-watch the end of the film. Discuss what makes the ending satisfying.



8 Jigsaw Film Reading

Divide students into “expert” groups. All students record information relevant to their topic as they watch a scene of the film then discuss it as a group. Groups re-form with the new groups including a member of each of the original groups. Experts “teach” their group about their topic. Example – View the “dream” sequence or a “battle” sequence or a “river” sequence or the “healing” sequence or the “shooting” (of Sarah) sequence.

- What does sound contribute to this sequence?
- What is the effect of the use of certain shots and/or editing techniques in this sequence?
- What is the tone/atmosphere of this sequence? How is it created?
- Describe the setting and its importance.
- How does this sequence contribute to character development?
- What important ideas are highlighted in this sequence?

Further information

For press kits, trailer and further information on the film visit our website: www.riverqueenthemovie.com

River Queen is released in cinemas around New Zealand from January 26, 2006. See next page for cinema details.

River Queen is distributed by 20th Century Fox Films. Visit their web site at: www.foxmovies.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

EXHIBITOR PHONE & FAX LIST FOR RIVER QUEEN

Whangarei

Skycity Cinemas
Mark Bonham
Ph: (09) 430 3347
Fx: (09) 438 8559

Auckland

Village Skycity Cinemas Queen Street
Lorraine Malone
Ph: (09) 979 2404
Fx: (09) 979 2401

Village Skycity Cinemas Newmarket
Dahlia Posesione
Ph: (09) 520 1369
Fx: (09) 520 0372

Village Skycity Cinemas Highland Park
Bridget Davy
Ph: (09) 535 2941
Fx: (09) 535 3370

Village Skycity Cinemas West City
Toni Austin
Ph: (09) 837 6997
Fx: (09) 837 6999

Village Skycity Cinemas Manukau
Bridget Davy
Ph: (09) 263 3810
Fx: (09) 263 4419

Village Skycity Cinemas Westgate
Toni Austin
Ph: (09) 831 0222
Fx: (09) 831 0223

Village Skycity Cinemas St Lukes
Carrane Gascoigne
Ph: (09) 815 4901
Fx: (09) 815 0386

Hoyts Wairau Park
Ryan Novak
Ph: (09) 443 8259
Fx: (09) 443 7799

Berkeley Cinemas
Katrina Berghan
Ph: (09) 428 0701
Fx: (09) 428 0706

Berkeley Cinemas Takapuna
Renee D'Aguair
Ph: (09) 488 6000
Fx: (09) 488 6005

Berkeley Cinemas Mission Bay
Ripeka Tahiwī
Ph: (09) 521 9223
Fx: (09) 521 9225

Berkeley Cinemas Botany Downs
Andy Fordham
Ph: (09) 272 5007
Fx: (09) 272 5200

Hamilton

Village Skycity Cinemas
Karen Lay
Ph: (07) 834 1222
Fx: (07) 839 7003

Tauranga

Cinema 8 Tauranga
Paul Desmond or Justin Chaney
Ph: (07) 577 0288
Fx: (07) 577 0287

Cinema 4 Mount Maunganui
Paul Desmond or Justin Chaney
Ph: (07) 572 3311
Fx: (07) 572 2611

Rotorua

Reading Cinemas
Adam Morrison
Ph: (07) 349 0061
Fx: (07) 349 0062

Taupo

Starlight Cinema Centre
Peter Smith
Ph: (07) 377 1085
Fx: (07) 377 1085

Gisborne

Odeon Multiplex
Raey Wheeler
Ph: (06) 867 3339
Fx: (06) 868 1230

New Plymouth

Toptown Cinema 5
Pam Smith
Ph: (06) 759 9077
Fx: (06) 759 9056

Hawkes Bay

Reading Cinemas Napier
Nicole Speakman
Ph: (06) 831 0601
Fx: (06) 831 0609

Reading Cinemas Hastings
Nicole Speakman
Ph: (06) 837 0341
Fx: (06) 837 0349

Wanganui

Embassy 3 Cinemas
Gary Vinnell
Ph: (06) 345 0097
Fx: (06) 347 6774

Palmerston North

Downtown Cinema 8
John Garrett
Ph: (06) 355 5355
Fx: (06) 355 5400

Porirua

Reading Cinemas
Tinica Mitchell
Ph: (04) 237 1075
Fx: (04) 237 1079

Hutt City

Hoyts Lower Hutt
Anthony Leva'aoalae
Ph: (04) 566 9962
Fx: (04) 566 9950

Wellington

Reading Cinemas Coastlands
John McCarthy
Ph: (04) 902 9225
Fx: (04) 298 2231

Reading Cinemas Courtenay Central
John Wood
Ph: (04) 801 4608
Fx: (04) 801 4605

Hoyts Manners Mall
Richard Jennings
Ph: (04) 472 4112=
Fx: (04) 499 1534

Embassy Theatre
Kerry Robbins
Ph: (04) 384 7656
Fx: (04) 385 9037

Nelson

State Cinemas
Norbert
Ph: (03) 548 3885
Fx: (03) 548 3906

Christchurch

Reading Cinemas The Palms
Ross Churchouse
Ph: (03) 375 7080
Fx: (03) 386 3204

Hoyts Moorhouse
Adrina Rahurahu
Ph: (03) 341 0298
Fx: (03) 366 9220

Hoyts Riccarton
Derek Rive
Ph: (03) 341 0290
Fx: (03) 341 5241

Hoyts Northlands
Glenda Clark
Ph: (03) 352 0211
Fx: (03) 352 3601

Queenstown

Embassy Cinemas
Richard Jensch
Ph: (03) 442 9994
Fx: (03) 441 8469

Dunedin

Hoyts Octagon
Sam Richmond
Ph: (03) 474 6069
Fx: (03) 477 0351

Rialto Cinemas
Barbara Henderson-Wragge
Ph: (03) 474 2201
Fx: (03) 474 2202

Invercargill

Reading Cinemas
Neville Cook
Ph: (03) 211 1555
Fx: (03) 214 1115

River Queen

SCHOOL TRIP ORDER FORM

TO THE MANAGER
CINEMA NAME:
LOCATION:
FAX NUMBER:

We would like to bring the following classes to see RIVER QUEEN at your cinema. Please advise if the dates and times are suitable and confirm the costs involved.

SCHOOL:
ORGANISING TEACHER:
CONTACT PH. NUMBER: FAX NUMBER:
CLASS(ES):
NO OF PUPILS:
PREFERRED DATE:
TIME:

REPLY FROM THE CINEMA

SCHOOL USE ONLY

HOD Approved:

HEADMASTER Approved:

Transport

Permission Slips: