

Making it True, Making us Care:
Understanding What Makes a Story Compelling
Teacher's Instructions

Students watch films all the time. But do they think about how a good story is told through film? To get your students to think about how filmmakers tell stories through film, they will watch one Centropa film several times, each time analyzing a different aspect of its construction: story, structure and film techniques. Centropa films are perfect for this activity – they are engaging, short and use creative methods to tell stories through narrative, images and sound.

We designed the worksheet to encourage students to reflect on and analyze 1) the story being told, 2) the story's structure, and 3) how the emotion of the story is conveyed through images and sound, as well as narration.

We list below several options for how to do this activity. Whichever you choose, make time for students to discuss their observations about the story, the order in which the story is told, and how the filmmaker uses images and sound to tell the story.

Suggested films include:

- Kurt Brodmann (Austria, 6 minutes)
<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=2&nID=78&q=m>
- Joseph Faludi (Hungary, 5:43 minutes)
<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=12&nID=78&q=m>
- Ernst Galpert (Hungary, 4:46 minutes)
<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=13&nID=78&q=m>
- Katarina Loefflerova (Slovakia, 5:07 minutes)
<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=6&nID=78&q=m>

Options for this assignment include:

- Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the above films to watch. They watch in their groups per the instructions and answer the worksheet questions together.
- If you do not have separate computers for students to use, then show only one film to the entire class, fill out the worksheets in groups and discuss. We suggest the Brodmann film.
- If you are short on class time, students can either do the entire assignment at home or watch the film at home and then, in class, fill out the worksheet with those classmates who viewed the same film, followed by a class discussion.

What Makes Us Care?
Analyzing a Film to Understand How to Make a Film
Student Worksheet

For this activity you will watch a short Centropa film. Your goal: analyze how the filmmaker constructed the film so you can generate ideas for making your own film.

You need to watch the film three times:

Part I: Watch the film to get a sense of the story being told.

Part II: Watch the film again and notice the structure of the film.

Part III: Watch the film one last time to analyze the film techniques that tell the story through music and images.

Name of Film: _____

Part I: What story is being told? Watch the film **without** taking notes; then answer these questions:

- 1) In one sentence, what was the main story told in this film? What was the “thesis” of the film?

- 2) How did the filmmaker choose to tell the story? How did she or he use one aspect of the story to tell the larger story (of the town, of the person’s life)?

- 3) Did one aspect of the film stand out as important for telling the main story – a photograph, image, sound? How did this element help tell the story?

- 4) What conflict or obstacle does the main person/people in the film face? How was this conflict or obstacle resolved or overcome?

Part II. How is the story told? Watch the film again, **taking notes**. When necessary, stop the film to write a note OR answer these questions after viewing.

- 1) What order is the story told in? (Does it start from the end of the person’s life? The middle? The beginning? How does the film tell the story in a way everyone can follow?)

- 2) How does the film move from one part of the story to another? What information is included? What information is left out (especially if they skip over many years)?

Part III. How do sound and visuals help tell the story? Watch the film one last time. This time, identify four parts of the film where music or sound, photographs or images help contribute to the story. Indicate below how the particular sound or image chosen by the filmmaker conveys the emotion or facts of the story.

	Part of Story	Sound or Music/Image or Photograph Used	How does it convey the emotion and/or facts of the story?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Part IV. Reflection. In a few sentences, reflect on what film techniques the filmmaker used to make you care about the story as told through film.
