

Year 11 Film Knowledge Booklet

Term 3

Name:

Class:



Whiplash (Chazelle 2014): Summary

The film opens with Andrew Neimann ([Miles Teller](#)) playing the drums at Shaffer Conservatory of Music, the music school in USA and he's just an alternate drummer in some school band. Andrew abruptly stops playing drums when the band conductor, Terence Fletcher ([J.K. Simmons](#)) appears at the door in front of him and asking Andrew some personal information of him. When Fletcher asks Andrew why he stopped playing, he resumes playing drums. After he finishes playing, Terence says he did not mean to resume playing then he asks Andrew to show his rudiments by playing the drums again. While Andrew plays drums, Fletcher slams the door but he comes back to retrieve his forgotten jacket.

The next day, Andrew enters one class aside from Fletcher and there, he meets the drummer named Ryan Connolly ([Austin Stowell](#)). Shortly, the professor arrives and the class performs "Billy's An". Andrew sees the man (presumably Fletcher) in silhouette looking at the door. After the class, Andrew peeks into one of the classrooms where the class is handled by Fletcher, and he is being looked at by Fletcher.

Later, back at the Studio Band, Andrew is playing drums as core drummer. Suddenly, Fletcher breaks inside and Andrew becomes horrified of him. Fletcher conducts every saxophonist and bassist one by one and finally the drums. After that, Fletcher tells Andrew to come and he is told to come at his room tomorrow at 6 in the morning.

Andrew meets Nicole ([Melissa Benoist](#)), the girl working at the cinema and invites her to go out with him. The next day, Andrew realizes that he is late for class. Andrew struggles and rushes quickly to the school, only he goes inside the empty classroom. Andrew knows that the class actually starts at 9 AM. Andrew waits three hours before the class. At exactly 9:00:00am, Fletcher arrives and begins conducting the song called "Whiplash." During the band practice, Fletcher confronts then suddenly yells at a saxophonist named Metz ([C.J. Vana](#)) playing out-of-tune and angrily tells him to get out of the Studio Band. This escalates Fletcher's abusiveness and wrath. Fletcher has the class take a break. Fletcher and Andrew have a conversation about his life and family.

After the break, the class resumes. But when Fletcher loses the patience of Andrew's drum tempo, Fletcher throws a chair at Andrew (but he dodges it). Fletcher slaps Andrew every four in 12 counts he makes and he will not stop questioning until Andrew answers whether he is "dragging" or "rushing". Andrew answers "rushing" then Fletcher forces Andrew to tell the whole band that he is really upset, louder! Fletcher then mocks Andrew about his parents being separated. Once again, Fletcher tells Andrew that he is upset, louder. Thus, Andrew is being embarrassed and insulted.

At his home, Andrew keeps practicing drums, making his hand bleed in the process. After the band performs at the competition, Tanner ([Nate Lang](#)), core drummer, gives his music sheets to Andrew. Andrew neglects the music sheets to buy a can of coke at the automated vending machine. As Tanner is looking for his music sheets, they mysteriously disappear. Tanner can't play without the sheets. Andrew steps in, stating he knows the song, Whiplash, by heart. Andrew plays well and earns Tanner's spot. Thus, Andrew is the new core drummer. Andrew's family is having dinner at his home and talks about his experience in Shaffer.

At the Studio Band, the band is practicing the new song called "Caravan" which needs an extreme time stamp measure of 330 bpm. Fletcher dismisses the band except Andrew when Fletcher discusses him about that note. Shortly, Ryan Connolly, whom Andrew met from the other class, arrives. Andrew plays the drums to test the ability of the tempo but his tempo fails while Ryan plays well. Therefore, Fletcher takes Ryan as the new core drummer, but Andrew does not agree to this. Jealous, Andrew will be the core drummer if he earns the part.

Whiplash (Chazelle 2014): Summary

Andrew breaks up with Nicole, saying his ambition will only hinder their relationship. At his home, we see Andrew practicing drums harder with a pitcher of water with ice beside him in case he bleeds. As he fails to reach the required tempo, Andrew punches the drum in frustration and his hand is bleeding, dripping it in the pitcher of ice.

At the Studio Band, Fletcher tearfully reveals in class that a talented former student of his, Sean Casey, has died in a car accident. The band rehearses "Caravan", but Carl Tanner struggles with the tempo; Fletcher auditions Andrew, Ryan and Tanner for hours while the class waits outside but the three fail to reach the required tempo. When it is now Andrew's turn, Fletcher kicks the chair then throws the drum away in wrath and even tells Andrew to increase the tempo. In this process, Andrew's left hand is bleeding and the blood drips onto the drum set. After a one minute of playing, Fletcher finally tells Andrew that he earned the part.

On the way to a jazz competition, the bus that Andrew rode breaks down. So Andrew rents a car but he arrives late for rehearsal without his drumsticks. He drives back to the car rental office and retrieves the drumsticks, but as he speeds back, his car is hit by a truck. He crawls from the wreckage and despite his injury and bloodied face, he struggles to make into the jazz competition. With his left hand injured, he is unable to play and drops the drumstick to the floor. After that, Fletcher says Andrew that he is done. Andrew attacks Fletcher in front of the audience.

Andrew is expelled from Shaffer and contacted by a lawyer representing the parents of Sean Casey. The lawyer explains that Sean actually hanged himself, having suffered anxiety and depression after joining Fletcher's class. Sean's parents want to prevent Fletcher from teaching; Andrew agrees to testify and Fletcher is fired.

Andrew goes to the club where he sees Fletcher and the jazz performers. As the song ends, Andrews walks out of the club but Fletcher calls him and having a chat with Fletcher. Fletcher explains that he pushes his students beyond the expected so they might achieve greatness. He invites Andrew to perform at JVC festival concert with his band. Andrew agrees and invites Nicole, learning that she has a new relationship.

On stage, Fletcher tells Andrew he knows he testified against him, and in revenge, leads the band in a new piece Andrew was not given sheet music for. Andrew leaves the stage humiliated, but returns and begins playing "Caravan", interrupting Fletcher as he addresses the audience. The rest of the band joins him, and Fletcher follows suit. Andrew ends the performance with an extravagant drum solo. Fletcher is at first angry, but gives a nod of approval to Andrew as he finishes.

Much was made in the media about the noticeable maleness of the Academy Awards this year. Not a single woman was nominated for either Best Director or Screenplay. But more than that, the Oscars 2015 was dominated by films about men and about masculinity itself.

Damien Chazelle's exhilarating drama ***Whiplash*** tells the story of Andrew (Miles Teller) as he struggles to become the lead drummer in his music school's decorated jazz band, run by tyrannical musician Fletcher (JK Simmons). Andrew practises hard and knows he's pretty good, but he needs to be validated. His mother left when he was young, so Andrew has been brought up without a female figure in his life. He craves approval, but has a somewhat sterile relationship with his father, who doesn't seem to understand what Andrew is doing. **The notion of being approved by Fletcher – a recognised alpha male – excites Andrew to the degree that he is prepared to do just about anything.**

Fletcher represents everything that Andrew idealises. He's a whirlwind of acid-tongued testosterone and is 100% sure of his talent. Fletcher doesn't need validation from anyone because he sits at the top of the food chain – both in terms of music and masculinity. **Even Fletcher's appearance is one of masculine performance. He is stripped down, in terms of his shaven head and his plain black clothing, with no sort of flourish upon his body. For Fletcher, there's no need for the kind of style-conscious appearance so favoured by the modern "metrosexual" man. Notably, Andrew is a baby faced youngster who seems unkempt in appearance. He doesn't have the same focus as Fletcher.**

Andrew's acceptance into Fletcher's band early on in ***Whiplash*** marks, in his view, his seat at the table of masculinity. **It is significant that merely being a member of the band transforms Andrew from a distant loner to the arrogant man who immediately attempts to enter into a relationship with Nicole (Melissa Benoist).** Andrew believes that being in a relationship is a part of his duty as a man and so he simply asks for a date from the only girl he ever meets – the box office girl at the cinema he regularly visits.

Nicole is nothing but lovely to Andrew. However, he decides to give her the chop when he realises that she impedes his path to success. **For Andrew, his first real female connection is nothing more than a distraction from his work at winning the approval of the uber-macho Fletcher.** When he realises that his relationship with Nicole is an inessential part of his masculine performance, he sees no reason to keep it going. For Andrew, it was never about love – or even lust.

Critics have bemoaned the underwritten nature of Nicole's role in ***Whiplash*** and it is irksome in such a male-dominated awards year, but her character in the film is a reflection of how the protagonist sees her. For Andrew, just like every other kind of human connection, she's barely a human being and merely a utility on his path to masculine utopia.

Masculinity becomes a performance and a competition between two figures battling to outalpha the other is the film's finale. In an attempt at revenge for Andrew making a complaint about Fletcher's treatment, the latter sets him up for a fall at an important concert. After initially fleeing the stage, Andrew returns and defiantly leads the band himself, defying Fletcher's authority and indeed his masculinity. The final sequence focuses on how masculine conflict can turn abruptly into magic - the two men go from full-blooded war to grudging respect in the space of a single scene. Andrew finally succeeds in earning the respect of Fletcher by beating him at his own game. **He proves that he can hold his own in a masculine arena by taking on the alpha. In that scene, Andrew finally succeeds in achieving his own personal masculine utopia.**

Summary:

Women are under-represented in film as seen in the Oscars of 2015

- Whiplash is a study of masculinity – Fletcher, represented as the 'alpha male' and sensitive loner Andrew who sees Fletcher as his masculine ideal
- Poor representations of women in the film – Nicole (Melissa Benoist) who is 'underwritten' and serves only to aid Andrew on his path to manhood
- The final scene is a battle of the alpha males and a happy ending for Andrew who surpasses his masculine goals by earning the respect of Fletcher

Camera Shots and Angles

Eye level shot - There are as many camera angles as there are shots, but in general they can be classified in three ways, eye level, high angle, and low angle.

Eye level shots put the viewer on an equal status with the subject.

High angle shot - The high angle shot looks down on the subject. As the words imply, it puts the viewer in a superior position to the subject, or conversely, it makes the subject appear weak or inferior.

Low angle shot - The low angle shot, in contrast, looks up at the subject. This gives the subject the appearance of strength or power.

Over the shoulder shot- The over the shoulder shot is used for longer conversations, and establishes near eye contact between the subject and the viewer, over the shoulder of another subject.

Extreme Close-up (ECU) - An Extreme Close-Up, sometimes called a "tight close-up," might perhaps frame only a part of a human face (an eye or the mouth), or perhaps a hand or foot. Extreme Close-Ups can in fact frame anything very small. This is a common shot found in video demonstrations of intricate procedures (e.g. dissections, drawings, etc.)

Close-up (CU) - This camera shot, sometimes called a head shot," usually frames an object about the size of a human head usually not including shoulders

Medium Close-up (MCU) - This camera shot indicates a space equivalent to a person's head and their shoulders

Medium Shot (MS) - This shot includes space which would frame a person's head and torso. This shot can also encompass two people standing next to each other filmed from the waist up. Two people sitting at a desk, such as can be seen in television newscasts, represents an example of a Medium Shot.

Medium Long Shot (MLS) - A Medium Long Shot can frame one or two people standing up, that is, their entire body

Long Shot (LS) - A Long Shot will be able to take in an entire room or large group of people. When the camera pulls back at the end of a newscast to allow you to see the entire set (cameras, desks, cables, lights, etc.) they are using a long shot

Extreme Long Shot (ELS) - An extremely long shot might encompass a picture of an entire house or, in fact, anything large. An extreme example can be found in the opening shot of "The Sound of Music." Here the camera actually frames several mountains, and then zooms in until we see Julie Andrews singing and smiling.

Editing Terminology

Straight Cuts = increase the pace of a scene. The most obvious example being an action sequence. It could also occur in a dialogue sequence when two people are yelling at each other so you cut back and forth between them faster, often overlapping dialogue, in order to increase the tension/emotions between them.

Fade Out = an image is made to disappear gradually or the sound volume is gradually decreased to zero.

Fade In = a gradual increase in a motion-picture or television image's visibility at the beginning of a sequence.

Dissolve = is a gradual transition from one image to another

Wipe = A **wipe** is a type of **film** transition where one shot replaces another by travelling from one side of the frame to another or with a special shape.

Jump cuts = are when the editor disrupts the continuity of an action. For example the action of someone throwing a baseball after picking it up off the ground.

The person bends over and picks up the ball. Instead of watching them come back up from the ground, it cuts from their hand on the ball on the ground immediately to them throwing the ball.

Cross cutting = is when a film is edited to show two lines of action occurring at the same time

Glossary of Film Terminology

Aesthetics = The specific 'look' of the film. The film's style.

Auteur = From the French 'author'. A director who has control over the style of the film.

Cinematography = Aspects of camera angles, distance and movement.

Context = When, where, how, and why the film is set. Time, place and circumstances.

Conventions = Methods, ingredients, things necessary for the style/category of film.

Diegetic Sound = Sound that is part of the film world (car horns beeping, birds singing)

Non-diegetic Sound = Sound added in post-production to create a certain atmosphere.

Genre = The style or category of the film.

Iconography = The images or symbols associated with a certain subject.

Indie/independent = Film that is independent of the constraints of mainstream Hollywood. These films are often characterised by low budgets, location settings (rather than studio), (often) inexperienced directors and fairly unknown casts.

Key lighting (high and low) = Lighting design to create different light/dark ratios. High-key lighting is bright and produces little shadow, whereas low-key lighting is used to specifically create shadow and contrast.

Mainstream = Popular, conventional, and/or part of a major film studio system.

Mise-en-scène = Literally, 'what is in the frame': setting, costume & props, colour, lighting, body language, positioning within the frame all come together to create meaning.

Motif = A dominant theme or recurring idea.

Plot = Different to story, plot is the narrative order that the story is told in.

Representation = The way that people, places and events are constructed.

Screenplay = Written by the screen writer, this document tells the story and will contain no camera direction.

Story = The ideas & events of the narrative whole.

Shooting script = Written by the director & cinematographer (not the screen writer), this script focuses on planning the camera shots & other practical elements that will bring the screenplay to life.

Spectator = An individual member of the audience.

Sound Terminology

Diegetic sound = Sound that is part of the film world.

Non-diegetic sound = Sound that is added into the film in post production.

Contrapuntal sound = Sounds and music that contrast with the images on the screen.

Pleonastic sound = Sound that is heightened or exaggerated for effect.

Sound bridge = Sound that carries from one scene to the next.

Ambient Sound = Background sound.

Voiceover = Characters or narrator speaking over other images on screen.

Dialogue = Speech by the characters.

Whiplash Article

Drill Sergeant in the Music Room

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/10/movies/in-whiplash-a-young-jazz-drummer-vs-his-teacher.html>

The world worships excellence and runs on mediocrity. Most of us are fated to dwell in the fat middle of the bell curve, admiring and envying those who stake out territory in the higher realms of achievement. There is a wide gulf between doing your best at something and being the best at it, a discrepancy in expended effort and anticipated reward that is the subject of “Whiplash,” Damien Chazelle’s thrilling second feature.

This story of an ambitious young striver and his difficult mentor could easily have been a sports movie, and structurally, it resembles one. There are montages of grueling practice scattered among scenes of tense competition, all of it building toward a hugely suspenseful (but also, to some extent, never in doubt) championship game moment of reckoning. But Andrew Neiman (Miles Teller) is a jazz drummer rather than an athlete, enrolled at a highly selective Manhattan school (Juilliard in all but name) and under the sway of a charismatic and terrifying instructor, Fletcher (J. K. Simmons).

Fletcher has a first name, but nobody has the nerve to use it, and in classic drill sergeant or gym teacher fashion, he calls his students by their surnames, generally in the course of browbeating and humiliating them. Progressive pedagogical methods have not penetrated the room where his studio band practices, a virtually all-male preserve of sarcasm, sadism and enforced virtuosity. There is nowhere Andrew would rather be.

Mr. Chazelle, a 29-year-old natural-born filmmaker whose previous feature was the stylistically daring, hipster-cute musical romance [“Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench,”](#) has an aficionado’s ear for jazz and an offbeat sense of genre. He and the director of photography, Sharone Meir, give “Whiplash” the brooding, spooky look of a horror movie, turning the New York streets and the school hallways into a realm of deep, expressive shadows. There is an atmosphere of whispery menace, and Mr. Simmons prowls the screen with a vampire’s stealth and a killer’s wry half-smile. Fletcher is a seductive monster, swiveling from charm to nonchalance to violent rage with a snap of the fingers. The scariest words a studio band player will ever hear are “not quite my tempo.”

But Andrew eagerly signs up for Fletcher’s cult of perfection, though whether in the role of acolyte or human sacrifice remains in question for most of the movie. Andrew is not one for modest aspirations: He wants to vault beyond the masses of session guys and second-stringers into the pantheon, to keep company with Buddy Rich and Charlie Parker and the other giants of the art form. This makes him a bit insufferable, and Mr. Teller, adept at finding the ambiguous middle ground between self-confident nice guy and smug jerk, is not shy about demonstrating Andrew’s arrogance. (A recent [interview](#) in The New York Times suggests that he may share his character’s seriousness and self-confidence.)

Andrew is a young man at a crossroad. He can either pursue normal activities for a person his age — dating Nicole (Melissa Benoist), a Fordham student; going to the movies with his dad (Paul Reiser) — or he can practice until blood splashes on the skins of his drums in hopes of impressing his mentor. “Whiplash,” which takes its title from one of the tunes Andrew must master, neatly maps out the nature and cost of this choice, and the anguish and exhilaration it brings him.

Whiplash Article

Maybe a little too neatly at times. For all its dexterity and assurance, the movie has its share of false notes and rhythmic stumbles. The contrast between Fletcher and Andrew's father, who long ago gave up his dreams of literary glory to become a teacher, is drawn a little too emphatically, as if nice guy and artist were completely antithetical. A few plot twists test the limits of credibility. And there is something a little dispiriting — if sadly unsurprising — about the way Mr. Chazelle turns a historically African-American art form into the existential arena for a couple of white guys.

Still, the battle of master and disciple is exciting and terrifying to witness, and, at its best, the film can feel as wild and spontaneous, as risky and precise, as a live jam session. The music — original compositions by Justin Hurwitz, Mr. Chazelle's collaborator on "Guy and Madeline," supplemented by some classic jazz numbers — is potent and pungent.

You can think of the mad-mentor plot as a songbook standard, a familiar composition transformed by the distinctive interpretation of a gifted group of performers. Mr. Teller and Mr. Simmons work through a lively and complicated duet of aggression, suspicion and unspoken complicity, with spellbinding results. They know how to play serious artists, because that's exactly what they are.

By going deeper into the details of musicianship than most such movies — by allowing us to hear things as Andrew and Fletcher do, and to understand the endless and exacting discipline of their work — this one breaks free of the constraints of realism and takes wing toward the sublime. It may get a few things wrong, but it aims at, and finally achieves, an authenticity at once more exalted and more primal than mere verisimilitude.

The long, intricate final scene transcends psychological drama with a surge of pure musical inspiration, pushing the audience's response from curiosity to empathy to awe. Just try to sit still in your seat. "Whiplash" may not quite be a great movie, but there's no doubt that it knows a thing or two about what greatness means.



Homework for weeks 1 and 2: Revision Due =

1. Revise the plot summary of Whiplash ready for a recall quiz in lesson.

Homework for weeks 3 and 4: Revision Due =

1. Revise the following ready for a recall quiz in lesson.

Read the Whiplash article in the knowledge organiser.

Summarise your findings about the film.

Homework for weeks 5 and 6: Micro Analysis Due =

Chose 2 key scenes from the film and write a micro anlysis of each.

You must refer to the following in your responses.

Cinematography

Mise-en-scene

Sound

Editing



Wider Reading List

- WJEC Eduqas GCSE Film Studies (Text Book) - https://www.amazon.co.uk/WJEC-Eduqas-GCSE-Film-Studies/dp/1911208020/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1531228817&sr=8-1&keywords=eduqas+film+studies+textbook
- BBC Bitesize section on film—<https://www.bbc.com/education/guides/z9hrwxs/revision/1>
- Link to the specification we use—<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies/gcse/>
- Whiplash (Chazelle, USA, 2014)
- Sims, D. (2014) The Uncomfortable Message in Whiplash's Dazzling Finale, www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/10/the-ethics-of-whiplash/381636/
- Skoczylas, J. (2017) Film Analysis of Whiplash (2014), prezi.com/xidrhy8nqsee/filmanalysis-of-whiplash-2014/
- Anon. (2015) Whiplash: A Film Analysis on the Key Elements of the Movie, themarcofeed.wordpress.com/2015/04/14/whiplash-a-film-analysis-on-the-keyelements-of-the-film/
- Hardy, R. (2015) Breaking Down the Oscar-Winning Editing of Whiplash, nofilmschool.com/2015/04/breaking-down-oscar-winning-editing-whiplash

Component 1: Key Developments in US Film

Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes

35% of qualification

This component assesses knowledge and understanding of **three** US films chosen from a range of options.

Assessment consists of **four** questions on **one** pair of US mainstream films and **one** US independent film:

Section A: US film comparative study

- **one** stepped question on the **first** of the chosen pair of films (produced between 1930 and 1960)
- **one** stepped question on the **second** of the chosen pair of films (produced between 1961 and 1990)
- **one** question requiring a comparison of the chosen pair of films

Section B: Key developments in film and film technology

- **one** multi-part question on developments in film and film technology

Section C: US independent film

- **one** question on one US independent film.

Component 2: Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style

Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes

35% of qualification

This component assesses knowledge and understanding of **three** global films produced outside the US chosen from a range of options.

Assessment consists of **three** questions in three sections:

- **Section A: one** stepped question on one global English language film
- **Section B: one** stepped question on one global non-English language film
- **Section C: one** stepped question on one contemporary UK film.

Component 3: Production

Non-exam assessment

30% of qualification

This component assesses the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of film to a production and its accompanying evaluative analysis. Learners produce:

- **one** genre-based film extract (**either** from a film **or** from a screenplay)
- **one** evaluative analysis of the production, where learners analyse and evaluate their production in relation to comparable, professionally-produced films or screenplays.

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