Lesson Description

The creation of written works, just as with any other piece of art, can be created collaboratively as much as they can be by individuals. For this lesson, students will be introduced to the idea of collaboration in the creative process by analyzing the film *Raging Bull*. They will note and analyze the importance of the directing, editing and acting in the film (while learning these terms) to better understand this. Subsequently, groups will then be asked to analyze how different the same scene can be when looked through only one of the three lenses discussed, ultimately opening up a discussion about the advantages and challenges of working together on a creative piece.

Objectives

- As a class, students will identify and define several cinematography terms related to film production, responding to these definitions by identifying their use in creating a narrative.
- In pairs, students will understand how the tone of a film can be changed through editing (including audio and video cuts) and framing, stopping to jot and share their observations with their partners.
- Students will be able to identify tone and character traits by the dialogue of a film’s characters.
- In groups, students will compare the production process of a film to that of written works by examining the differences between the early drafts of *Raging Bull* and the final cut of the film.

Enduring Understanding(s) & Essential Questions

1. Final products often reflect the collaborative input of multiple individuals involved in the creation process, rather than a single individual’s vision.

   - In what kind of cinematic style is *Raging Bull* shot?
   - In the “kitchen scene,” what is Jake’s major fear concerning the fight?
   - What is the role of a film’s director? Of the editor?
   - How does a changing of camera angles during the “kitchen scene” enhance the discussion between the two characters?
   - What do Robert DeNiro’s annotations say about the way he approached his role?
   - What does the kind of language used in the dialogue between the two characters reveal about their personalities?
   - Would the scene have been the same if the actors had followed the director’s script precisely?
(13) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:
(A) evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and informing opinion on issues;
(B) interpret how visual and sound techniques (e.g., special effects, camera angles, lighting, music) influence the message;
(C) evaluate various techniques used to create a point of view in media and the impact on audience; and
(D) assess the correct level of formality and tone for successful participation in various digital media.

(14) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:
(A) plan a first draft by selecting a genre appropriate for conveying the intended meaning to an audience, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;
(B) develop drafts by choosing an appropriate organizational strategy (e.g., sequence of events, cause-effect, compare-contrast) and building on ideas to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing;
(C) revise drafts to ensure precise word choice and vivid images; consistent point of view; use of simple, compound, and complex sentences; internal and external coherence; and the use of effective transitions after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;
(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and
(E) revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(15) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to:
(A) write an imaginative story that:
   (i) sustains reader interest;
   (ii) includes well-paced action and an engaging story line;
   (iii) creates a specific, believable setting through the use of sensory details;
   (iv) develops interesting characters; and
   (v) uses a range of literary strategies and devices to enhance the style and tone.

Vocabulary

- **Cinéma vérité**: A documentary style of filmmaking where the camera is a fly-on-the-wall (or closer) observer of real dramatic situations. The style influenced narrative filmmakers who allow their actors to improvise situations based on a premise rather than a script.
- **Editor**: The person who assembles all the various parts of shot footage (including multiple takes) into something that makes sense and provides pacing for a film.
- **Director**: Originally the director of a film directed the actors and provided on-set guidance. More recently, many see the director as the primary artist and influence on a film, responsible for the look, pacing, tone, and acting in each
scene.

- **Italian Neo-Realism**: A post-WWII movement in film which showed the gritty realities of survival, often through the somewhat objective eyes of children. DeSica’s *The Bicycle Thief* is noteworthy for using non-actors in leading roles.

- **Method Acting**: A group of techniques used by actors to create in themselves the feelings and thoughts of characters.

- **Important Names and roles**: Robert DeNiro (Actor), Joe Pesci (Actor), Martin Scorsese (Director), Thelma Schoomaker (Editor)

### Time Required
90 minutes

### Materials Required
- Copy of *Raging Bull*
- Copy of *The Cutting Edge* documentary
- Images of DeNiro’s archives including *Raging Bull* screenplay with DeNiro annotations. Contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of the PDF titled “CWA, Raging Bull DeNiro notes.”
- Transcription of dialogue from the final film (optional). Contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of the document titled “CWA, Raging Bull screenplay excerpt.”

### Procedure

#### Differentiation for students with visual impairment—Request a copy of *Raging Bull* with an ADP (audio described performance) option. If an ADP version of *Raging Bull* is not available, the teacher or a selected peer should sit next to the student with limited vision and describe the scene as the film plays.

**Note of caution**: The scene we have chosen from *Raging Bull* includes swearing between the two characters that may be considered gratuitous. Before using this film in your classroom, we strongly advise you to seek a campus administrator’s approval and parents’ consent via permission form.

### Engage 
10 minutes

- Prompt students with questions below to get them talking in small groups of neighbors (2-4) about filmmaking. *Post the following on the board or project onto screen.* (3 minutes)
  - What goes into making a movie?
  - Who do you think is responsible for making a movie?
  - Who is the most important person in the filming process?
- Discuss as a class. (7 minutes)
  - Record students’ volunteered answers to the questions on the board/overhead.

*The goal of this engagement is to get the class thinking about common conceptions (or misconceptions) of a film’s creation process. “The way we think of creating a movie is different than how we usually think about the writing process. The whole piece is, more often than not, thanks to the efforts of a group instead of an individual.”*

- The responses and questions developed during the engagement section
Introduce & Explore
25 minutes

- Introduce students to the background needed to understand the film clip and some pertinent industry vocabulary. (10 minutes)
  - Provide a brief summary of the film, the time it took from production to publication (1978-1980), and the names and roles of the three members of the cast and crew the lesson will focus on, Martin Scorsese (director), Thelma Schoomaker (editor), and Robert DeNiro (actor).
  - Students will copy down the film vocabulary (see pgs. 2-3) to keep for future reference, including when watching the clip from the documentary *The Cutting Edge*.
- View two video clips as a class. (15 minutes)
  - From *The Cutting Edge*: An interview with Thelma Schoomaker and Martin Scorsese providing commentary on the filming of the “kitchen scene” in *Raging Bull*
  - From *Raging Bull*: the kitchen scene itself.
    - While watching the scene, students will answer the following questions independently:
      - What is the tone of the scene?
      - How are the characters portrayed? *How do we get a sense of this based on the way the scene is shot?* On the language the characters are using?
      - Give students a few minutes after viewing to finalize their thoughts before discussing as a class.
- Discuss students’ responses to the questions re: the “kitchen scene,” move into discussion concerning the impact of collaboration on a screenplay or script as it moves to the screen or stage.
  - Ask students to consider what would happen if Schoomaker, Scorsese, or DeNiro and Pesci had neglected to add input during the process. Would the scene have been the same
    - without the editing they now know took place?
    - if the dialogue hadn’t been ad-libbed by the pair of actors?
    - if the scene had instead taken place outside or in a bar?
  - Students’ responses here should organically lead to discussion regarding how the final product reached a particular level of success because multiple individuals involved were able to influence the scene’s content and tone during the filmmaking process.

Explain
10 minutes

- In groups of 2-3, students will analyze a transcript of an early draft of *Raging Bull*’s screenplay with annotations from Robert DeNiro (1979) and a copy of the final kitchen scene (1980), comparing their dialogue and stage direction and discussing the differences identified, with a particular focus on DeNiro’s notes. Annotate/highlight evidence on the handouts provided; these findings will be important for the next step. (12-15 minutes)
• Continuing in their partnerships, students will discuss the following questions regarding the drafts, jotting down their answers to each to support success later in the lesson:
  o What changes or notes did DeNiro make that ended up in the finished film?
  o What kind of tone do you get from the early draft? Does it change how you think about the scene? Is it different from what you saw on screen?
  o What does the screenplay lose that only the visual aspect of the film can help emphasize? Would you think about the characters the same way if you couldn’t see their expressions?
• When all have had sufficient time to finish, call on 1-2 groups to explain their answers, supporting with cited evidence, for each of the questions. *Allow time for other groups to respond with questions or alternate perspectives, or to add info to their notes as needed.* (15-18 minutes)

**Evaluate & Close**

**15 minutes**

• Students will write a paragraph answering several questions, reflecting on the nature of collaboration.
  o What do students believe are the benefits of collaboration during a creative project?
  o How did each of the three people talked about (Scorsese, DeNiro, Schoomaker) contribute to the effect of the scene?
  o What problems might arise as they start their own collaborative project?
  o How do they believe they would deal with these problems?
• Call on a few volunteers to share their answers to the reflection questions with the class.
  o Discuss students’ input, esp. re: benefits of collaboration and possible solutions to any potential problems with it. *If necessary, guide students toward the idea that working with people who have different skills, interests, and talents leads to a more prospective product.*
• Remind students that they will be assigned a collaborative project next class in which they’ll have to employ the roles discussed during the lesson.

**Future Lessons**

This lesson sets the stage for the beginning of a four-day creative writing project in which students will collaborate to create a piece of fiction, taking on roles similar to those discussed today and putting it into practice. *(See “Collaborative Writing Assignment” document)*

**Resources:**
DeNiro, Robert. "Raging Bull," undated screenplay by Paul Schrader; with RDN notes 1968-2011 Harry Ransom Center Archives, The University of Texas, Austin, TX. 17