

"Shakespeare and Star Wars": Lesson Plan Day 12
by Adam Watson (NBCT)

Academic Goals:

Explain changes that occur when the same source material is adapted in various media.
Analyze the visual medium of film, especially how it is unique compared to other media forms.
Understand the plot of *Star Wars*.

Core Content Standards (for Reading Literature, 9th Grade):
9-10.RL.7, -9

Handout:
n/a

Instructional Plan:

Note: Watching *Star Wars* is academically crucial to the unit for two reasons. First, one cannot assume all have seen the movie, or at least have seen it recently. Therefore, the movie helps reinforce comprehension of the plot, in case students reading the play are lost or unsure. Secondly, viewing the movie builds a foundation to compare how WSSW changes the source material (i.e. the film).

1. Remind students to be active viewers of *Star Wars* with two purposes in mind: to better comprehend the story, and to watch for differences between how the film and play handle the same scenes. (Students may continue to use their two column chart to contrast WSSW and the movie.) Think how film depends on cinematic techniques that add meaning, as opposed to media such as plays or novels.
2. Watch from the end of Chapter 38 (1 hour 33 minutes) as the Millennium Falcon escapes the Death Star, to the end of the movie (approximately 30 minutes of viewing time). This is equivalent to Act Five of WSSW. Students should pay particular attention to the final Death Star battle, as that will be analyzed and compared to the Radio Drama version for [Days 13 and 14](#).
3. Have students share some of their findings.
4. Consider the remaining class period as flex time to use as you see fit. For example, if you needed to finish performing skits from [Day 11](#) and create closure for that lesson, do that *before* finishing the movie.

Suggested Extensions and/or Alterations :

Over the course of the story, who has changed more: Luke or Han? Students could do this as an individual written essay, a Socratic circle discussion, or online conversation on Edmodo or [TodaysMeet](#).

Color symbolism is very distinct in the Star Wars saga, and therefore makes it easier for younger students to analyze and decipher. Firstly, consider that for much of *Star Wars*, Luke and Leia wear a solid white outfit, whereas Darth Vader is solid black; innocence/good versus corrupt/evil seems obvious. Next, look at Han Solo and Ben Kenobi. What might Han's combination of white shirt and black vest and pants symbolize about his nature? How does old, wise Ben's brown robes suggest his

"grounded," elemental role in the story? Lastly, just when students accept "white=good," remind them that the stormtrooper armor is nearly solid white. Could white symbolize anything else? Looking ahead to the rest of the original trilogy, it is worth noting that Luke's changing outfits -- from the grey fatigues in *The Empire Strikes Back* to the black Jedi outfit in *Return of the Jedi* -- follow his path to maturity, and clash with the idea that black can only symbolize evil. Additionally, by *Return of the Jedi*, three colors of lightsabres (red, blue and green) will be shown. Who owns each color (and when!), and what might that symbolize?

In light of the blockbusters of today, we have to remind ourselves that *Star Wars* was cinematically groundbreaking in 1977. Besides its novel special effects and "old-fashioned" use of orchestral music (in the 1970's, pop songs were the typical movie soundtrack), the film is full of iconic moments and excellent usage of cinematic techniques. (Let us stop and give credit to cinematographer Gilbert Taylor and editors Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, and Richard Chew.) Who can forget the opening when the Star Destroyer rolls on and on and on, or the long shot of Luke looking wistfully at the twin suns of Tatooine? In today's viewing, the Millennium Falcon's escape from the TIE Fighters as well as the final Death Star trench run show how editing and shot selection can determine pacing and impact an audience. Consider an analysis of one or more scenes from the movie and how the cinematic techniques add meaning. For example, why is seeing Luke small in the frame of a long shot described above add an emotional layer? If you would like students to review or build their cinematic vocabulary, here are two source materials:

- I [made a Prezi](#) for a "History Through Film" class at our high school that goes over some of the more popular techniques, complete with pictures and videos.
- *Setting Up Your Shots*, a [great book](#) by Jeremy Vineyard and Jose Cruz, is an easy to understand collection of what a camera can do and when those choices might be made. Examples from popular movies are pointed out, and Cruz's illustrations are very helpful.

Post-Lesson Reflection:

This last viewing day is crucial for setting up [Days 13 and 14](#), as well as the final timed writing on [Day 15](#), so I highly recommend having these four instructional days taught right after one another without gaps if possible.

For the full unit overview, [click here](#).