English Teaching and the Moving Image

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Andrew Goodwyn's straightforward approach to teaching about the moving image demystifies this topic and shows how it can be easily incorporated into classroom practice. Building on teachers' knowledge of teaching about advertising, newspapers and visual adaptations of literary texts, this book includes chapters on:

- Adaptations: not just the film of the book
- Teaching film
- Teaching television
- Practical work
- New technologies and the moving audience

This jargon free book will be a stimulating and useful guide to teachers and student teachers looking to improve their knowledge of the moving image and its place in the English curriculum.

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To Anne
For all your help, love and support

Contents

Preface

English teaching has paid some attention to the moving image since the 1930s but in the year 2000, this attention became a curricular requirement for the first time. This book aims to help teachers make the most of this belated opportunity. Although English teachers have incorporated aspects of Media Education into their teaching over the past decade or so, its presence is by no means firmly established or consistent. There are a variety of reasons for this but a very significant one has been the prescriptive and somewhat reductive nature of the National Curriculum for English in the last years of the twentieth century, burdened by an even more cumbersome and uninspiring assessment framework. The rather sudden appearance of the idea that pupils should be taught about the moving image might be viewed as just one more demand on an overwhelmed profession.

This book argues that, whatever the mixed motives for this focus on the moving image, 2000 will have been a defining moment for the subject of English. Teachers of English have always been very clear about engaging with the real lives of their pupils without allowing the grim nature of much of reality to constrain them from the exploration of our emotional and aesthetic lives. The moving image is at the centre of a rapidly developing, multi-modal culture, it plays an absolutely central role in the lives of young people; it is a genuinely exciting time. Children and young people provide plenty of evidence of their intelligent engagement with this culture. It is a consumer culture but these young consumers seem more than a match for its designs on them; they have designs of their own and in a culture where technology is providing them with creative ways to engage with cultural resources they are becoming producers in their own right.

Teachers have had precious little chance to benefit from this creative energy but there are real signs that the force of these changes is proving irresistible. The book aims to be timely in helping teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum they must teach. However, it also aims to help them go far beyond the few statements about the moving image in Curriculum 2002. English has always been considered the key school subject; in embracing the moving image as central to its future, it provides a very exciting future for itself.

Moving in

The moving image finally 'arrives' in the English Curriculum

Does the study of the moving image belong in a subject with as vague a name as 'English'? Certainly many English teachers use the moving image in their teaching and even more of them enjoy the moving image as part of their cultural experience every day. Given the prominence of the moving image in twentieth century culture, and the current evidence that it seems likely to be even more dominant in the twenty-first, it may seem more peculiar that its study is not at the heart of a postmodern education. But clearly it is not. All teachers of all subjects use moving image material in their classrooms and consider this absolutely normal and, perhaps, 'natural', acknowledging its prevalence everywhere in pupils' lives (and their own), and perhaps as a result of this 'ordinariness' they feel little need to pay attention to the medium itself. There is no need to labour this point any further except to emphasize that the relatively sudden appearance of this set of statements somewhat ironically deserves some explanation:

> **Media and moving image texts**
>
> **5** Pupils should be taught
> **a** how meaning is conveyed in texts that include print, images and sometimes sounds
> **b** how choice of form, layout and presentation contribute to effect (for example, font, caption, illustration in printed text, sequencing, framing, soundtrack in moving image text)
> **c** how the nature and purpose of media products influence content and meaning (for example, selection of stories for a front page or news broadcast)

d how audiences and readers choose and respond to media.

[. . .]

9 The range of texts should include
[. . .]
b print and ICT-based information and reference texts
c media and moving image texts (for example newspapers, magazines, advertisements, television, films, videos).

(DfES: 2000)

Why should these statements appear in the National Curriculum for English in the year 2000? Why not in Art? Why not in 'Cultural Studies'? Why not let all students choose Media Studies at the age of either 14 or 16? Perhaps 'Citizenship' is the rightful place for a critical analysis of a consumer culture dominated by the moving image? And if it is going to appear in English, why suddenly start at the age of 11 given that children aged 5–11 spend many hours in front of the screen and by the time they have reached five have already absorbed thousands of hours of moving images and sounds? This highlights how arbitrary in one sense the appearance of this statement must be considered, and yet in other ways it is a quite logical outcome of a long curricular and political struggle. Certainly its appearance is potentially fundamentally important and it does need contextualizing and placing within a historical narrative.

What follows is a necessarily brief account of key developments that have led to the current focus on requiring English teachers to teach the moving image. Any such account is also partly a rationale in that it attempts to clarify certain key influences over time, but the rationale also needs summarizing as a conclusion and therefore completes this chapter. This account also intends to alert teachers to some of the key developments within the media, not in a highly technical way, but in a manner that might help them to make use of such material in their teaching. The moving image does have a very real history and at the simplest level certain texts, perhaps chiefly films, now have their own 'cultural heritage' status; it has even been seriously proposed that schools adopt this approach (see Chapter 6). This is certainly not the chief motivation for producing this book but it happens to remind us that the eternal debate about the literary canon is not the only such debate and also that it just happens to have a longer history than 'the movies'.

The moving image appearing in the English frame

The 1933 battle cry against popular culture of F.R. Leavis to 'discriminate and resist' (Leavis and Thompson: 1933) remains a seminal moment and vital starting point for an understanding of the vexed relationship between English teachers and culture, high or 'low'. The importance of Leavis' specific influence has been well documented (see for example Eagleton (1983), Goodwyn (1992a)). Although over 70 years old, the battle cry still gathers much support and with the overwhelming presence of the internet in people's lives may be about to increase its support. In simple terms Leavis argued that English teachers had to teach their vulnerable youngsters to resist the seductions of popular culture; he saw film in particular as one of the worst excesses of modern, cheap culture (for a more extended discussion see Goodwyn (1992a)). This is in no way to trivialize this concern; it is as relevant today as it was then. One aspect of teaching about the media *is* to help young people understand how it 'works' and to be active rather than passive consumers and to 'resist' when they see fit. The essential problem with Leavis' view is that his chief interest lay in creating a tiny elite of novel readers who would be the torch-bearers of high culture. This certainly might be the chief aim of a particular kind of education system but not in a society with any egalitarian principles.

The other reason for making Leavis' manifesto our starting point is that he took the advent of mass popular culture very seriously. In an ironic way he invented what became Media Studies. He was always a most earnest and even passionate critic, and one thing he certainly and rightly recognized in the early 1930s was that something profound had happened. His reaction was to fear this change and to argue that educators had a vital role to play in helping young people. Again, he was right about our vital role. However, one can also understand the nature of his fear in a time of enormous global uncertainty when fascism was on the rise. The idea of a mass media was a relatively new one but its power was becoming extremely evident. Radio had already demonstrated the power of a medium to reach 'the people' but it was always essentially a domestic, and in that sense intimate, medium.

In the approximately 20 years of moving images being shown on large screens up to 1933, the notion of a mass and very public medium became a reality. Crowds of people watching together was nothing new, of course; the difference was that they appeared to be watching

exactly the same thing; every theatre performance, in contrast, is 'unique'. Any kind of film could reach a huge audience very rapidly. At that time both the political right and the left felt the potential for getting a unified message across (see Inglis (1990)). Audience theory may have moved away from this fairly primitive conception but we can see now in the revival of cinema attendance through the 1990s that audiences are groups of people who actively want to watch together. It is young people in particular who in the twenty-first century enjoy this social experience. So we can acknowledge that Leavis, and many others, had recognized a paradigm shift. His particular concern was to appeal to English teachers to do something for their pupils.

For a considerable time, at least in the grammar schools, this elitist stance was the dominant, even sole concern of English teachers in relation to all mass media, their *raison d'être* being to preserve the cultural heritage of English literature. The title of Mathieson's classic 1970s study of English teachers, *The Preachers of Culture* (Mathieson: 1975), says it all. One reason, then, why the moving image motif appears in English is that as a subject it has self-consciously addressed young people's engagement with culture of all kinds. The initial stance, retrospectively characterized as 'inoculation theory' (Halloran and Jones: 1986) – i.e. dose them with a little popular culture and they will develop a resistant strain on their own – lasted perhaps 30 years as the dominant conceptual mode. It certainly continues to influence much current practice but no longer exclusively. In the mid-1990s it was also more or less enshrined in the National Curriculum for English. The extract above reveals that the pendulum has once more swung towards a much broader conception of Media Education.

However, in the 1960s a number of factors combined to effect an important conceptual shift (Hart and Hicks: 2002, 62–4). One factor was the emergence of a visible youth culture, initially concentrated on music and radio as a provider of music. Second was the extraordinary phenomenon of television: the moving image (however crude) was suddenly in the heart of the domestic space (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). Television was first a source of yet further anxiety to English teachers and other concerned parties (politicians, parents, etc.). The moral panic scenario in the history of technological change is now well documented (there is an excellent recent overview in Livingstone (2002)). However, as television settled into domestic culture it also became a

source of remarkable richness for all teachers and to English teachers in particular. It is worth considering the range that television suddenly brought to the common experience of most pupils, from news and documentary to modern drama and soap opera; the emergence of popular drama modes such as police/crime series, children's television, magazine-type programming and, of course, television advertising. It remains an irony (and one of the motivations for this book) that television now receives relatively little formal attention in school, probably a good deal less than in the 1970s and 1980s.

Whatever else, television combined all aspects of culture and so problematized simple notions of inoculation. The English teacher could thus engage much more with 'discrimination': which elements of 'TV' were worth watching after all? But this became increasingly hard to agree on and, it can be argued, began to generate what later became a more cultural analysis attitude to the media in general.

These changes to the media were certainly complemented by a profound shift in education. The 1970s brought comprehensive education and the grammar–secondary divide was brought together under one roof. Grammar school teachers of English and their secondary modern colleagues suddenly were in the same staff room. In real terms it took many years for this cultural clash to become even partially resolved when the common examination format of GCSE (in 1984) finally replaced the 'O' level and CSE models. Comprehensive education, it is worth remembering, is still quite a new idea in England and already significantly challenged by notions of specialization that may essentially undermine the original movement's key principles. The key point for thinking about the moving image is that film and television were certainly available to all sections of the population; in other words the media were to some extent a universal for all young people and the emergence of a distinct youth culture posed a new challenge to all teachers.

The comprehensive movement had many motivations and aspirations and has its own remarkable history (see Benn and Chitty (1996)). English teaching at this time embraced its ideals in its own comprehensive way. There was a gradual but profound shift from a cultural heritage, 'capital L' Literature model to a sociolinguistic model of English. The history of the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life* (DES: 1975), its construction by influential thinkers such as James Britton, Douglas Barnes and Harold Rosen,

and the development of the Language Across the Curriculum movement is well documented (see Marland (1977) for a contemporary account, Goodwyn (2002a) for a more retrospective judgement). In essence, because they were so focused on shifting teachers' thinking towards their use of language and the language of pupils, they barely noticed television or film. Battling, as they saw themselves, against the elitism contained in much residually grammar school teaching and thinking, they fought on the fields of literature and print text and engineered the revolution in the recognition of speaking and listening.

But clearly, although moving image texts were having an enormous impact on society, teachers were in general very conservative in their approach. There is a classic sociological study conducted in the mid-1970s, *Mass Media and the Secondary School* (Murdock and Phelps: 1973), which does investigate how teachers were reacting to the mass media in relation to their teaching and their pupils' lives. Its findings place teachers in four categories in terms of their approaches to using mass media material. In summary these are: favourable but a rare user; deeply against and deliberately excluding; very hostile and so only a user to develop discrimination and resistance; viewing as enriching and helpful in developing pupils' general understanding (Murdock and Phelps: 1973, 33–42). There has never been a substantial follow-up study, but it might well be that these categories have remained. They also discovered that 82% of teachers in selective and 44% in non-selective schools still thought that the study of the mass media had no place in the secondary curriculum. Despite gaining considerable attention and stimulating debate, the research itself was not a stimulus to change and its impact on schooling was negligible.

But the Language Across the Curriculum movement, whatever its different motivations, was the kind of paradigm shift that leads inevitably to other changes. For example it placed enormous emphasis on the value of pupils' talk; and what did children want to talk about if not television? The socio-linguistic turn can be seen in resources produced in the 1970s such as *Language in Use* (Doughty *et al.*: 1971), a great deal of which paid attention to newspaper and magazine texts to be examined as serious texts for study in their own right. This conceptual shift is a crucial one as it signals the beginnings of what became Media Education as English teachers now had an interest in all kinds of text, the literary text being just one form, not *the* form.

But the tensions within English inevitably remained. For example, the 1970s produced the rise of film studies in secondary schools. Many enthusiastic teachers began running film clubs. English departments tried showing Olivier's various versions of Shakespeare in the school hall. A few even went as far as offering an option like 'Film' for 'O' level. But this was all in the name of Art; film was worth studying as an art form (which of course it can be, see Chapter 3). Essentially for all its apparent cultural relevance this was chiefly cultural heritage in another medium. But at least it was experimental and innovative. It also signals that media-related work has often developed in more informal settings (see Chapter 6), school so often providing a point of resistance as opposed to inclusiveness. However, the moving image was receiving direct attention, at least some of the time, for its own sake.

If there was a time when television had some prominence in school it was during the period when video rapidly emerged (Levy and Gunter: 1988) as a significant factor in school and domestic life. It had many effects, but a few are well worth recalling. Video allowed the first opportunities for 'time shift' viewing; the viewer was now in charge as opposed to the medium. It meant that film could be viewed at home, leading for a time to a significant decline in cinema attendance. For teachers both changes were extraordinarily valuable. They could now show recorded programmes in school, both 'educational' material and mainstream, and they could easily bring in film to the classroom. I would argue that this did not lead to any major intellectual shift within English apart from among a minority of teachers. Video was essentially a wonderful convenience. Equally, the acquisition by some schools of a video camera was much less revolutionary than it might have been. It did lead to some interesting experiments but editing was far too cumbersome and expensive to allow for real creative work. For many pupils the sight of themselves 'on television' was probably the highlight.

But the study of television was now a practical possibility. Len Masterman's book, *Teaching about Television* (1980), is one indicator of the change in attitudes among some educators. It is worth noting that Masterman was somewhat anti-English teachers because he saw them as far too cultural heritage-like in their stance, letting all their literary baggage get in the way. This had some truth in it but was also an exaggeration. Those English teachers who were keen to teach about television turned their attention to a wide range of programmes and genres and in an era of course work could

encourage their students both to write about the media and also to try their hand at scripts and story boards. Television scripts were available in school editions, and organizations like the British Film Institute began to create resources for television as well as film. Local Education Authorities began to create Media Education advisory posts, The National Association for the Teaching of English set up its Media Education working group.

But if the rise of teaching about television can be seen as the first positive mainstream educational attention to the moving image, and therefore a sign of a significant shift in educational thinking, it was also evidence of a deepening rift in that thinking. The period of the 1980s was also that of the rise of Media Education and Media Studies. The rise was not of great significance to mainstream practice in schools, apart from in a few exceptional schools. Its significance lay ahead but it was a clear indicator of the rise of the Cultural Studies movement. This complex and often contradictory movement has its own history (see for example During (1993)). Whatever else, one of its most successful off-shoots is Media Studies, now one of the most popular, but still immensely controversial, subjects in higher education.

In secondary schools the 1980s began to polarize teachers. The rise of video and especially film on video had produced yet another moral panic. Young people clearly liked to get together to watch 'unsuitable' material, usually horror/violence but also with sexual content, and to do this unsupervised by adults. This is not to play down this issue as a real one; for parents and teachers this issue will never go away and the internet has brought it back to prominence again. Therefore, Media Education could be seen as a good idea by both conservatives and progressives, that is until a clear definition might emerge of what it was trying to achieve.

Its contested and emergent definition was a feature of the late 1980s and is ongoing. A very clear indicator of its rapid emergence is that by 1989 it appears as a part of a chapter in the Cox Report (DES: 1989), the report which defined the first National Curriculum (NC) for English. This period and its controversies are well documented (see Goodwyn, 1992). But here we enter into territory that has a very direct relationship to the 2000 curriculum and the appearance of explicit statements about the moving image. One key element was the analysis in Cox of the philosophy of English teaching and how its definitions helped to provide a conceptual base for a form of Media Education in English. Cox and his committee posited

(DES: 1989, 2.21–2.25) that there were five models of English teaching, used by all English teachers and prevalent throughout their work. These are as follows.

- A 'Personal Growth' view focuses on the child: it emphasizes the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives.
- A 'Cross-curricular' view focuses on the school: it emphasizes that all teachers have a responsibility to help children with the language demands of different subjects in the school curriculum: otherwise areas of the curriculum may be closed to them. In England, English is different from other school subjects, in that it is both a subject and a medium of instruction for other subjects.
- An 'Adult Needs' view focuses on communication outside the school: it emphasizes the responsibility of English teachers to prepare children for the language of adult life, including the work place, in a fast-changing world. Children need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively.
- A 'Cultural Heritage' view emphasizes the responsibility of schools to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language.
- A 'Cultural Analysis' view emphasizes the role of English in helping children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live. Children should know about the processes by which meanings are conveyed, and about the ways in which print and other media carry values.

The discussion above has touched on Cultural Heritage (CH) and Cultural Analysis (CA), but this is the first really explicit reference to CA as if a mainstream English activity. Personal Growth and Adult Needs are really pedagogical models. Language across the curriculum, according to English teachers (Goodwyn: 1992b), is not a model of 'English'; it is a pedagogical model for all teachers. Cox included a chapter (DES: 1989, Chapter 9) called 'Media Education and Information Technology', bringing together two, then, quite distinct areas which are now converging with remarkable