



Teaching about Scotland

This is one of a series of units for teaching about Scotland in German Secondary schools. All the materials were created by very motivated students in my Area Studies Scotland class, some with experience of teaching in a “Gymnasium“. The materials can be tried out as they are, or altered as desired. They can also be combined. One basic idea behind them all is that both the teacher and the learners can develop the materials themselves, according to their own interests, and then even offer them to another class. For some of these units printed information material is needed, for example ferry timetables, but if you don't have this, it is no problem to print it out from the Internet. Useful websites are given.

Scottish Film

Target group and Aim.

The unit is intended for an 11th grade class of a German Secondary school and covers two lessons (90 minutes). The goal is to give the class an idea of Scotland in film, and focuses on excerpts from Braveheart and Trainspotting. The complete film scripts are available from the Internet Movie Script Database at www.imsdb.

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- (1) Introduction
- (2) Lesson one
- (3) Lesson two
- (4) Film scripts
- (5) Gap text
- (6) Websites

(1) Introduction

Area Studies is a compulsory part of the English curriculum in German schools so that the pupils find out a bit about at least one of the countries where English is spoken. Here we have chosen to focus on Scotland as we think it is one of the most popular parts of the United Kingdom. In contrast to Wales and Northern Ireland, for example, Scotland is - through many myths and stories - well-known among young children of every Western country of the world.

Target Group:

We decided to choose an 11th grade of a regular German Gymnasium as the target group for our unit. At that age the pupils are at a stage in their development where they are capable of watching and understanding more 'difficult' films like those we have chosen here: *Trainspotting* and *Braveheart*. However, they probably don't have much experience of looking at films with a critical eye. Some have probably seen one of these films and most will have some general knowledge of films and film making. For a lot of young people of that age watching movies is an important part of their private and social lives. For many of them contemporary actors may be their idols and an evening 'at the movies' is a popular way of spending an evening with friends. We think watching a movie at school can be fun and relaxation for the class, but it can also involve concentrated viewing and thinking.

What we want our pupils to learn:

Our aim is two-fold: we want to give our pupils a brief overview of the different possible definitions of the term 'Scottish film' (see below) and show them possible connections between Scottish film and Scottish history and identity. This topic also provides a good opportunity to make the pupils aware of the problem of misrepresentation in the media.

Scottish movies, especially those made by non-Scots are a good way of showing that Scotland has sometimes been 'reduced' on screen to clichés like the Highlands, kilts or bagpipes. Questioning this has two effects: Firstly, the pupils will start to see a more differentiated and realistic Scotland.

Secondly, the pupils will become more critical of what they are presented with in the media in general. This ability to question authorities (here: movies) is essential for the development of any human being and is an important 'by-product' of this lesson.

The pupils will also get to know some important names in contemporary Scottish film beyond Sean Connery and they will discover that Scotland is not only the home of important inventors and writers, but also a country of well-known actors and directors.

In addition to that, the pupils will get an insight into the film business itself. They will get to know the most important words in film making (see below),

which can be very useful in everyday English (movies are one of the number-one topics for conversation), as well as some technical terms.

The unit:

Since the topic ‘Scottish Film’ is a very special one, we consider two periods (90 min) right. They can be part of a larger unit on Scotland, so the topic ‘Scottish film’ can be approached from the ‘Scottish’ side as well as from the ‘film’ side. This means, as said above, that we want to help the pupils reconsider their view of Scotland and make them aware that the movies they watch in class influence this view. We also aim to help them talk about films and read related texts.

It is easy to do Area Studies in a lively way. Working in teams on authentic texts, and doing creative writing, for example, keeps participants alert and motivated.

Our unit is divided up into three main parts: introduction, vocabulary work, and watching excerpts from the two films and discussing them.

Our timetable might look like this:

First lesson	
Explanation of the term “Scottish Film”	10min
Worksheet 1	10min
Introduction of Scottish actors and directors	10min
Worksheet 2	15min
Second lesson	
Another look at the Term “Scottish Film”	05min
Watching the extracts and talking about them	30min
Gap filling text	05min

(2) First lesson

Explanation of the term “Scottish Film”

(People have always liked to romanticise and tell stories about Scotland. The landscape, the mythology and the traditions of Scotland have always inspired poets, writers and, of course, also film-makers. So what could “Scottish film” mean?)

Firstly, there is “a Scottish Film”, which could mean a movie that is located in Scotland, made by a Scottish director, produced by a Scottish company with Scottish actors in all the important roles and most likely a Scottish theme. It is a ‘Scottish film’ just as the ‘German film’ is a German film etc. Examples are

Shallow Grave (1994) (“Ein kleiner Mord unter Freunden”) or Trainspotting (1996). (German examples of this?)

Secondly, “a Scottish film” can be a movie located in Scotland with a Scottish theme (most likely Scottish history) involving only some Scots. An example of this kind of “Hollywood” movie is Braveheart (1995). These movies tend to represent a romanticized picture of Scotland and ‘use’ Scottish history and Scotland's landscape. This kind of film can give a very one-sided picture of Scotland to the rest of the world. (German examples?)

Thirdly, “a Scottish film” can be a movie made in Scotland with no particularly Scottish theme or any other striking relationship to Scotland. The actors are not necessarily Scottish. A good example is Late Night Shopping (2000) which features the German actress Heike Makatsch. (German examples?)

The three different kinds of ‘Scottish film’:

1. Scottish theme, located in Scotland, made and acted by Scots, (Trainspotting)
2. Scottish theme (History), made and acted by non-Scots (Braveheart)
3. No particularly Scottish theme, made by Scots, acted by Scots and non-Scots, (Late Night Shopping)

This could be expressed by a table:

	location	actors/director	theme	example
1.				
2.				
3.				

To take a closer look at film and let the class do some work on their own, we have some questions.

Worksheet 1

- 1) What is a film genre?
- 2) Write down the names of all the film genres you know.
- 3) What do the following people in the film industry do: script writer, producer, director, film-maker, film editor, cameraman, actor/actress

Possible ideas:

- 1) Comedy, Tragedy, Drama, Detective Film, Thriller, Horror, Love story, Science Fiction Film , Documentary

2)

Scriptwriter:

a person who writes scripts for films or for radio or television programmes.

Producer:

a person whose job it is to produce plays, films, programmes or CDs.

Film maker:

someone involved in making films, in particular a director or producer.

Film editor:

a person who prepares a film, or a radio or television programme, by selecting some of what has been filmed or recorded and putting it in a particular order.

Cameraman:

a person who operates a camera for television or film making.

Actor/Actress:

an actor/actress is a man/woman whose job is acting in plays or films.

Director:

a person who controls the content of the film's plot, directs the performances of all the actors, organises and selects the location in which the film will be shot and manages other technical details such as the positioning of cameras.

Introduction to Scottish actors and directors

There are some famous people in the Scottish film business but very few people know that they are Scottish. Do you know any Scottish actors or directors? (Probably not any directors.)

After listening to the pupils' comments about Scottish actors and directors, we would present two famous actors and one director on the overhead projector. We chose the actors Sean Connery and Ewan McGregor and the director Bill Forsyth, because (at least the actors) are world-famous but how many people know that they are Scottish?

The information can be something like this. The information given should be relevant for the people in the class – it can even be selected by someone in the class.

Sean Connery:

(We chose a picture of him wearing the kilt.)

Sean Connery was born in Edinburgh in 1930. When he was a teenager, he started his career by playing bit parts and did some modelling. He left school to work as a full time actor. At the age of 16 he enlisted in the Royal Navy where he got 2 tattoos, which reflect his relationship to his family and Scotland. In 1950 he won a Mr. Universe title for bodybuilding. In the 1960s he became a star with the role of secret agent James Bond. In all, he acted in seven Bond movies. Other famous films in which he played an important role are:

Highlander (1986)

The Name of the Rose (1986)

The Untouchables (1987)

Indiana Jones (1989)

Ewan McGregor

He was born in a small town in central Scotland in 1971 and he is also very proud of being a Scot. He went to school in Perth till he was 16. At Perth Repertory Theatre he gained some acting experience, and then went to the London Guildhall School of Music and Drama for 3 years. His feature film debut was in Bill Forsyth's Being Human (1993). He gained more public prominence in Danny Boyle's Shallow Grave (1994). Ewan's next big success was with the film Trainspotting in 1996.

Bill Forsyth

Bill Forsyth is one of Scotland's most famous and successful directors. He was born in Glasgow in 1946. He attended National Film School. Because he wanted to be independent and make his own movies he quit school and started an assistant's job on documentaries. His first film, *That Sinking Feeling*, appeared in 1980. One year later his film *Gregory's Girl* was a success. In 1983 *Local Hero* won the Award for the Best Director.

Worksheet 2

Try to find definitions for as many as you can: a close-up, lighting, the cast, a clapperboard, credits, a dialogue, a cut, a flashback, the storyline, special effects, the soundtrack, a genre, the plot, a scene, the script.

Possible answers

Close-up:

A photograph or a picture in a film that shows a lot of detail because it is taken very near to the subject. For example: a close-up of James Bond's face

Lighting:

The use of different electric lights to give a particular effect.

Cast:

all the people who act in it.

Clapperboard:

Two pieces of wood that are connected by a hinge and hit together before each scene when making a film, to make it easier to match the sound and pictures of different scenes.

Credits:

The list of people who helped to make a film, a CD, or a television programme.

Dialogue:

A conversation between two people in a book, film or play.

Cut:

When the director of a film says "cut", they want the actors and the camera crew to stop filming.

Flashback:

In a film, novel, or play, a flashback is a scene that returns to events in the past.

Storyline:

The story and the way in which it develops.

Special effects:

In film, special effects are unusual pictures or sounds made by using special techniques.

Soundtrack:

The soundtrack of a film is its sound, speech, and especially music.

Genre:

A genre is a particular type of literature, painting, music film, or other art form which people consider as a class because it has special characteristics.

Plot:

The connected series of events which make up the story.

Scene:

A scene in a play, film or book is part of it in which a series of events happen in the same place.

Script:

The script of a play, film or television programme is the written version of it.

(3) Second lesson

We would watch excerpts from *Trainspotting* and *Braveheart*. Here we would focus again on the importance of the term “Scottish Film” and try to make the pupils aware of the different perspectives of the two films. We would like to talk about the topics the films have in common, and look for the differences.

The following discussion is intended to ‘round off’ the topic. What we hope to get out of this part of the lesson should help the pupils to start to see Scotland in a more realistic way and question the way so-called ‘facts’ are presented to them in movies. We want to make the pupils aware of the difficult nature of Scottish history, and especially show them the connection between Scottish films and Scottish history and identity.

As the language in the two films may be difficult to understand for pupils with little experience in listening to Scottish speakers, we would hand out parts of the film scripts so that they can read them before and/or after viewing. This way the pupils get the chance to see and read a ‘real’ film script.

Braveheart is a Hollywood movie, made by an American director (Mel Gibson) but filmed (partly) in Scotland. It tells the story of the Scot William Wallace, a real person, who fought for the freedom of Scotland from England.

Trainspotting was made by a Scottish director, filmed in Scotland with Scottish actors. It tells the story of a group of drug addicts.

It is easy to see differences between the two films:

Historical setting, heroism, tradition, countryside, fighting on the battle field / contemporary city life, drugs, opting out etc.

Interested pupils might like to look for features which the two films have in common e.g. searching for identity and freedom.

(4) Filmscripts

We have chosen the opening and final scenes of both films as well as some other scenes, and would give the class the script of these. Here we have only reproduced some lines from the extracts as the complete version is available from www.imsdb.com

Extracts from the film script of “Braveheart”

FADE IN:

EXT. THE SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Epic beauty: cobalt mountains beneath a glowering purple sky fringed with pink, as if the clouds were a lid too small for the earth; a cascading landscape of boulders shrouded in deep green grass; and the blue lochs, reflecting the sky. We hear a voice, husky, Scottish...

VOICE OVER

I will tell you of William Wallace.
Historians from England will say I am a liar.
But history is written by those who have
hung heroes.

VOICE

The King of Scotland had died without a
son, and the king of England, a cruel pagan
known as Edward the Longshanks, claimed
the throne for himself. Scotland’s nobles
fought him, and fought each other, over the
crown. (.....)

William passing through the crowd like a
stranger. Then he glances toward the knot
of girls. He sees Marion. She sees him,
then looks away. (.....)

... and the Highlanders hurl their bodies down the hill, ready to run through
hell itself. In SLOW MOTION we see their faces...

SCOTS

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! Wal-lace!

And OVER THIS, we hear the voice of William Wallace...

WALLACE’S VOICE

In the year of our Lord 1314, patriots of
Scotland, starving and outnumbered,
charged the fields of Bannockburn. They
fought like warrior poets. They fought like
Scotsmen. And won their freedom. (.....)

Extracts from the film script of “Trainspotting”

RENTON
(voice-over)

Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family,
Choose a fucking big television, Choose washing machines,
cars, compact disc players, and electrical tin openers.
Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance.
Choose fixed-interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter
home. Choose your friends.
(.....) Choose your future. Choose life.
But why would I want to do a thing like that?
I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons?
There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?

RENTON
(v.o)

The down side of coming off junk was that I knew I would need
to mix with my friends again in a state of full consciousness. It
was awful: they reminded me so much of myself I could hardly
bear to look at them. Take Sick Boy, for instance, he came off
junk at the same time as me, not because he wanted too, you
understand, but just to annoy me, just to show me how easily he
could do it, thereby downgrading my own struggle.
(.....)

SICK BOY

Now what?

TOMMY

We go for a walk.

SPUD

What?

TOMMY

A walk.

SPUD

But where?

TOMMY

There.

SICK BOY

Are you serious?

TOMMY

Well, what are you waiting for?

SPUD

I don't know, Tommy. I don't know if it's... normal.

TOMMY

It's the great outdoors.

SICK BOY

It's really nice, Tommy. Can we go home now?

(.....)

RENTON

(v.o)

It seems, however, that I really am the luckiest guy in the world. Several years of addiction right in the middle of an epidemic, surrounded by the living dead, but not me -- I'm negative. It's official. And once the pain goes away, that's when the real battle starts. Depression. Boredom. You feel so fucking low, you'll want to fucking top yourself. (.....)

RENTON

(v.o)

So why did I do it? I could offer a million answers, all false. The truth is that I'm a bad person, but that's going to change, I'm going to change. This is the last of this sort of thing. I'm cleaning up and I'm moving on, going straight and choosing life. I'm looking forward to it already. I'm going to be just like you: the job, the family, (.....) leisurewear, luggage, three-piece suite, DIY, game shows, junk food, children, walks in the park, nine to five, good at golf, washing the car, choice of sweaters, family Christmas, indexed pension, tax exemption, clearing the gutters, getting by, looking ahead, to the day you die.

THE END

Source of both sets of extracts: www.imsdb.com

(5) Gap text

Readers should think about the title first, Through Myth to Reality, then skim through the text for gist, consider what kind of words might fit in, then finally choose the right word from the list.

Through Myth to Reality

In the spring of 1953 the Hollywood _____ Arthur Freed paid a visit to _____. When we met in _____ he told me he wanted to find a village in the _____ which would look unchanged with its inhabitants just awakened after the passage of a hundred years.

I took him first to Culross on the Firth of Forth explaining, that it was not a Highland village but was certainly very little changed since the seventeenth century. The domestic dwellings with their crow-stepped gables, and sun-dials on the corners of the houses in Cathedral Street, Dunkeld. Comrie, set against the Grampian foothills on the Highland fault, I thought might give him what he wanted, especially as it had an old hump-backed bridge, necessary for the _____ [of the movie]. Braemar, next on the exploratory journey, had the sought-for Highland _____. Then a long leap west to Inverary, its shoreline buildings well preserved and enjoying a highly picturesque _____ on the head of Loch Fyne, which I thought would have an appeal for him. He insisted on seeing Brig-o'-Doon, although I assured him it had nothing to do with the Highlands.

Then Arthur Freed went back to _____ and declared: "I went to Scotland but I could find nothing that looked like _____."

From: Hardy, Forsyth, Scotland in Film, Edinburgh University Press, 1990.

Missing words:

ambience
Edinburgh
Highlands
Hollywood
location
producer
Scotland (2x)
stones
storyline

(6) More things to do:

We also made a fun board game with question cards on Scotland and film. The class could make their own!

The class could also think out a film and act out one scene from it, with the following instructions:

We want you to create a scene from your own film.

Get together in groups of 3-4 people. Each group has to represent a different genre, which the other groups have to guess. So don't tell anybody outside your group which genre you have. You'll get a sheet of paper with the genre on it and 4 words you have to use in your scene. You have 10 minutes preparation time. One group can stay inside the classroom, the others have to find another place outside the classroom (where the other groups can't see them while they practise!)

DRAMA

Loch Ness, Glasgow, bagpipes, Mary Stuart

DOCUMENTARY FILM

Loch Ness, Glasgow, bagpipes, Mary Stuart

COMEDY

Loch Ness, Glasgow, bagpipes, Mary Stuart

DETECTIVE FILM

Loch Ness, Glasgow, bagpipes, Mary Stuart

(6) List of related internet sites:

www.scotlandthemovie.com

www.edinburghfimstudios.co.uk

www.chem.gla.ac.uk

www.edfilmfest.org.uk

www.imdb.com

www.iofilm.co.uk

www.britmovie.co.uk

http://sites.scran.ac.uk/films_of_scotland

<http://scotlandinter.net/cinema.htm>

PS: For more information on film in Scotland see under Area Studies Scotland in the Course Materials section of www.FindYourFeet.de. There are great new films such as "Just a Kiss" (love/race relations in Glasgow) and there is the actor Billy Boyd, who was Pippin in Lord of the Rings. German youngsters might like to think about what "German film" means for them, what topics there are in German films at the moment, and whether Scottish films and German films might have some topics in common.

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