



CINEMA

AS A DIDACTIC STRATEGY
IN HISTORY TEACHING

An independent approach to the proper
use of the audiovisual resources

specific case of the study:

SECOND WORLD WAR



Fundación Ediciones

Clío

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Specific Case of Study: World War II

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The Use of Cinema as a Didactic Strategy in History Teaching: An Independent Approach to the Proper Use of Audiovisual Resources. Specific Case of Study: World War II



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This paper seeks to explore the advantages of cinema as a didactic tool in history teaching. It analyzes the origins of cinematography and the effects it has on the viewer. The theoretical basis relies on perspectives from specialists in the cinematic field, and previous experiences are drawn upon through the use of cinema forums as a learning tool. In practice, a lesser preference for long and old documentaries was observed, with a greater receptivity towards documentaries and films produced by commercial companies. Likewise, it was confirmed that learning is more meaningful when supported by audiovisual resources. Finally, there is reflection on the significance of educating through cinema, and guidance is provided for the promotion of documentaries and other audiovisual productions .

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Introduction

This essay highlights the virtues of cinema as a didactic strategy that enhances the teaching of history in secondary and university education. Various activities, named “film-forum,” were designed with the goal of assessing the level of motivation among students at both levels. Second-year high school students, specifically in the subject of World History, as well as university students from the Geohistory of the World area of the Social Sciences Project at the National Experimental University Rafael María Baralt, were shown films and documentaries on the said war theme¹.

The reactions of the students to the films and documentaries showed that cinema, as a didactic resource, promotes and facilitates meaningful learning. A preference for recent documentaries and films with durations of less than an hour and a half was noted, as opposed to extensive and old documentaries. In terms of genres, although there was an inclination towards science

1 These documentaries and the rest of the screenings were continuously shown over more than ten years, and the results are the fruit of classroom experience, preferably between the years 2015 and 2020.

fiction and commercial war cinema, students showed openness to less commercial dramatic historical films when they received proper guidance. This predisposition prompted research into the beginnings of cinema and its impacts on students.

Since its inception at the end of the 19th century, with silent cinema and its evolution into sound cinema, cinematography has marked a milestone in human history, standing out for its ability to entertain and amuse. If the potential of cinema is correctly directed, this medium can become a valuable educational ally for historical knowledge. Therefore, this work includes a section dedicated to “Educating through cinema,” where advice is provided for the selection and screening of appropriate films and documentaries for the study of history.

1

Birth, Evolution, and Diversification of Cinematography

The intrinsic desire of human beings to capture and preserve the most significant moments of their existence has been a determining factor in the development of various recording mediums throughout history. From the early artistic expressions in caves that captured scenes of daily life to the evolution towards more elaborated pictographic representations, this longing has been constant, ultimately culminating in the invention of the moving photographic image.

The roots of cinematography are found in ancient China, where the first steps towards projecting moving images were taken. Through cut-out figures on rice paper and the shadows game created by candlelight, dynamic visual narratives were generated, often accompanied by music, thus laying the groundwork for what would eventually transform into modern cinematography.

The progression towards capturing still images was achieved with the invention of the camera obscura, the precursor to the modern photographic camera. This device, capable of capturing and projecting scenes from the real world, was crucial in the development of photography. The constant improvement of photographic techniques, along with the exploration of movement and light, were essential elements in the evolution towards cinematography.

By the end of the 19th century, the convergence of technological and artistic advances facilitated the birth of cinema, marking a revolution in storytelling and the documentation of reality, which would continue to evolve into the art and industry we know today. Cinematography, defined by the Royal Spanish Academy as “the art of representing moving images on a screen through photography,” had its first public manifestation in Paris in 1895, thanks to the Lumière brothers. They, along with Georges Méliès, laid the foundations of cinema with the creation of the first documentaries and fiction films.

Cinema began to develop with movies that fused photographic images and soundtracks, enriching narratives of suspense and romance. Actors of the era, such as Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton, stood out for their gestural expressiveness, thus defining silent cinema. With the arrival of sound cinema at the end of the 1920s, and the screening of “The Jazz Singer” in 1927, a new era began that would consolidate Hollywood as a cultural and commercial powerhouse.

Over 118 years, cinema has seen the emergence of movements such as surrealism, German expressionism, and Soviet

realism, among others. These movements have proposed innovations that enriched cinema, addressing everything from political narratives to stylistic experimentations. “Third cinema,” for example, emerged as a critical voice from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, seeking to represent social and cultural realities often ignored by commercial cinema.

The democratization of cinema, especially through digitalization, has facilitated the exploration of new genres and production outside of major film studios. Indigenous and historical cinema, for example, have gained ground, showing that valuable works can also be created with limited resources. Digitalization has also allowed for broader distribution, reaching global audiences and fostering a richer intercultural dialogue.

Contemporary cinema continues to evolve, embracing technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, and exploring new narrative forms that challenge our traditional perceptions of cinematic art. Through its history, cinema has proven to be a resilient and adaptable medium, capable of capturing the complexity of the human experience and reflecting the concerns, dreams, and realities of society.

2

Effects of Cinema on the Viewer

The cinematic experience, unique in its intense sensory load, deeply impacts both the sight and hearing of the viewer. This comprehensive stimulation evokes a range of sensations, emotions, and reflections derived from what is observed on screen, immersing the viewer in worlds and realities that transcend the everyday. According to Astudillo and Mandinueta (2008, p. 131), “cinema plays a crucial role in the dissemination of universal culture, as our society is shaped and informed by cinema and television today.

The development of cinematic technology, from silent to sound cinema, and later, the digital revolution, has elevated cinema to a prominent status as a source of entertainment and information. It has transformed into an artistic expression that connects with people of all ages and backgrounds globally. It includes not only films but also television series, adapted novels, reports, and documentaries that address everything from historical themes to contemporary dilemmas, offering new perspectives on the complexity of the human condition.

As an expert in the field points out, “to understand a society built around the image, its technologies, and narratives, implies recognizing the ongoing role of cinema, both in the public and private spheres, as a persistent influence and an attractive enigma” (García, 2002, p. 2). Cinema, by projecting often unknown or overlooked realities, invites reflection and questioning, offering a window to cultures, histories, and global issues.

Classified as the seventh art, cinema stands out for its unique ability to construct narratives that capture the viewer’s imagination, transporting them to experiences lived by others. Through cinematic techniques such as editing, music, photography, and scriptwriting, times and spaces are manipulated, creating an emotional connection between the audience and the story. This immersive capacity is unparalleled in other art forms, making cinema a powerful tool for evoking empathy, inspiration, and, occasionally, social change.

The impact of cinema extends beyond mere passive reception; it becomes a dialogue between the work and its audience. Films that tackle controversial or taboo subjects play a vital role in opening up public debates and promoting social awareness. For example, cinema has been a crucial medium in the exploration and representation of cultural diversity, civil rights struggles, environmental conflicts, and technological advances, reflecting and sometimes anticipating changes in society.

In the educational field, cinema has consolidated itself as an invaluable didactic resource, offering an attractive and accessible way to teach history, literature, philosophy, and other disciplines. The visual and auditory narrative of cinema facilitates

the understanding of complex concepts and the retention of information, while encouraging critical thinking and discussion.

With the arrival of the 21st century, digitalization and streaming platforms have revolutionized the way we access and consume cinema, democratizing access to a broader spectrum of cinematic productions. This new era has not only changed the industry but has also altered the expectations and experiences of the viewer, offering new ways of interaction and participation with audiovisual content.

3

Impact and Credibility of Cinema in Historical Representation.

In the last decade, productions like “The Tudors” (2007) by Steve Shill, “Spartacus” (2010) by Steven S. DeKnight, “Game of Thrones” (2012) adapted from the novel by George R. R. Martin (1996), and “Vikings” (2013) by Michael Hirst, have dominated the global audience’s attention, demonstrating the vast reach and influence of cinema and television series on the perception of history. The audience’s attraction to these visual narratives underscores a growing interest in exploring the past, although these representations may blend fiction with historical reality.

The credibility of cinema as a source of historical knowledge is partly due to its foundation in literature and its meticulous setting in defined temporal and spatial contexts. Unlike conventional historical texts, which may offer a detailed chronicle of past events, cinema has the capacity to transport the viewer to another era, allowing them to visualize and feel the historical context in a more immediate and emotional way.

Films such as “Schindler’s List” (1993) by Steven Spielberg and “The Pianist” (2002) by Roman Polanski, among others mentioned throughout this essay, provide emblematic examples of how cinema can complement traditional historical narratives. Through their powerful visualizations and narratives, these films not only inform about past events but also invite a profound emotional experience, bringing the viewer closer to understanding the human impact of history in a way that written texts seldom achieve.

Cinema, however, also faces the challenge of balancing historical fidelity with the demands of entertainment. While some productions strive to remain true to historical records, others adopt creative liberties that can distort reality. This dilemma presents an opportunity for critical analysis and discussion, especially in educational contexts, where students and teachers can examine cinematic representations alongside primary and secondary sources to develop a more nuanced understanding of history.

In addition to movies and series based on historical events, the documentary genre offers a direct window to the past, often incorporating archival footage, interviews with witnesses and experts, and a more explicitly educational approach. Documentaries like “The Act of Killing” (2012)² by Joshua Oppenhei-

2 The Act of Killing” (2012), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, is a documentary that examines the mass killings in Indonesia following the 1965 coup through a unique approach: it allows the perpetrators, led by Anwar Congo, to recreate their crimes on camera. Adopting cinematic genres they admire, such as gangster and western, the killers enact their deeds with a mix of pride and spectacle, challenging documentary conventions and the viewer’s perceptions of justice and memory. The film reveals how history is narrated by the victors,

mer, which explores the mid-60s massacres in Indonesia, challenge viewers to confront aspects of history that are difficult to address in traditional textbooks.

In the educational realm, cinema reveals itself as a didactic resource of immense value. Integrating movies and documentaries into the curriculum allows educators to tackle historical subjects with a richness and depth that complement traditional teaching. This approach not only facilitates a more comprehensive and emotional learning but also fosters critical, analytical and reflective skills in students, preparing them for a more complex understanding of historical narrative and its representation.

Using cinema as an educational tool demands careful selection of content and pedagogical guidance to help students discern between fact and fiction, stimulating their curiosity and their ability to question and reflect on the information received. Thus, cinema becomes not only a means to visualize history but also a starting point for critical exploration of our past, present, and future.

often glorifying atrocious acts and how society can forget uncomfortable truths. Through the recreations, moments of introspection and possible remorse are provoked in the killers, questioning the sincerity of these emotions. “The Act of Killing” is a provocative work that questions power, violence, cinema, and the human capacity to rewrite history, leaving a reflection on collective memory and individual responsibility towards the past.

4

Educating Through Cinema

Educating through cinema in the current era means navigating amidst distractions and technological advancements, presenting a growing challenge for educators. Especially at the high school level, teachers tirelessly seek new didactic strategies that not only strengthen learning but also promote the acquisition of meaningful knowledge. In this context, teaching history faces particular challenges. Traditionally, the methodology for teaching history has relied heavily on specialized textbooks, often requiring the consultation of multiple sources to address a specific topic. While indispensable for understanding the past in relation to the present, mandatory reading can be effectively complemented with alternative strategies, such as the use of films or documentaries. These audiovisual media provide a broader perspective on historical events, enriching the understanding gained from texts.

It's worth noting that audiovisual narrative condenses time, influencing the amount of information conveyed compared to

written narratives. However, audiovisual media have the advantage of highlighting visual and emotional aspects, in addition to offering a wealth of details through moving images. From an educational perspective, both documentaries and dramatic films can be valuable teaching tools, as long as they are carefully selected and used under the guidance of an experienced educator. The proper choice of cinematic material, taking into account both its duration and pedagogical relevance, is fundamental to the success of the educational process.

Cinema, with its feature films and shorts, offers a wide range of genres to explore our past and other topics of interest. Documentaries, in particular, are valued for their ability to present factual events sequentially, supported by narratives and visual evidence, facilitating their integration into the educational curriculum. On the other hand, a well-founded film can also offer an authentic view of history, if it is based on reliable sources and approached critically.

Cinema not only provides new perspectives on society, revealing both its confessions and concealments, but also invites critical interpretation. Through film-forum, teachers have the opportunity to analyze a historical event in detail and contrast it with the existing literature on the topic, thus enriching historical learning and stimulating students' critical thinking. This methodology promotes deeper learning, encouraging students to question and delve into their understanding of history by combining written and visual media.

Implementing cinema in teaching processes has proven to be an effective didactic strategy. Through the screening of docu-

mentaries and films on topics such as World War II, more meaningful and emotional learning has been facilitated. However, a student preference for shorter and more current documentaries, as well as for films of specific genres that meet commercial cinema expectations, was observed.

When selecting audiovisual material for educational purposes, it's crucial to consider technical aspects and the target audience. For example, for high school students, it is recommended to avoid extensive documentaries or those with a traditional narrative format that may be tedious. In contrast, for university students, long documentaries can be of great educational value, serving as rich historical documents.

Careful selection of films and documentaries, effective teacher mediation, and the promotion of critical discussions enrich the educational experience. By encouraging students to explore history through audiovisual resources, educators can foster a greater appreciation for the study of the past, encouraging critical thinking and a deep understanding of historical events.

4.1. Experiences Accumulated in History Teaching Through Cinema by Screening Documentaries and Films About World War II

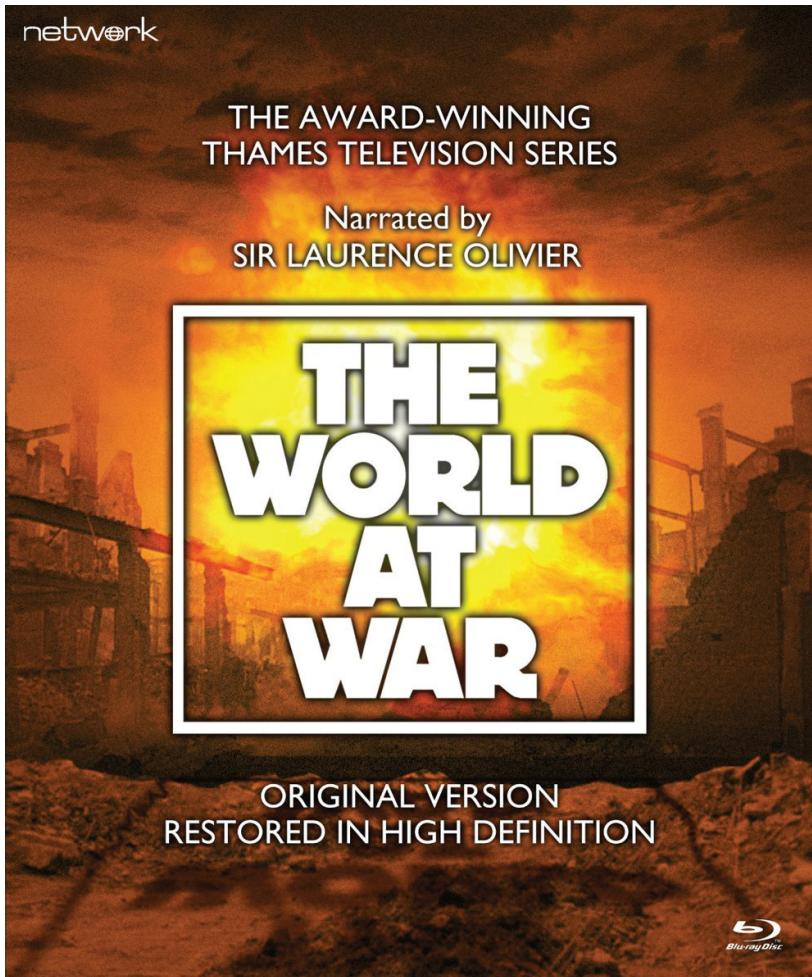
Among the accumulated experiences in this area, two stand out related to the same theme: "World War II." Two documentaries and six films were screened to second-year students, specifically in the subject of World History. At the university level, the film forum was applied to students in the history area, belonging to the Social Sciences Project at the National Experi-

mental University Rafael María Baralt. The selected documentaries were “The World at War” and “World War II in Colour.” The chosen films include “Schindler’s List,” “Life is Beautiful,” “The Pianist,” “Downfall,” “Valkyrie,” and “The Book Thief.” Below are their reviews:

“The World at War” stands out as an exceptional educational resource for teaching the history of World War II. Its production, which took place between 1972 and 1973 by Thames Television in the UK, is notable for its thoroughness and depth, covering from the conflict’s precursors to its global repercussions. The narration by the renowned Laurence Olivier, complemented by Carl Davis’s music, adds an emotive and immersive dimension to the learning experience.

One of the most notable features of this documentary is its commitment to authenticity and historical detail. Produced by Jeremy Isaacs and co-produced by Peter Batty, “The World at War” relies on a wide range of sources, including interviews with direct witnesses of the events, both military and civilians, political leaders, and ordinary people who lived through the conflict. This provides a multifaceted and human view of the war, highlighting the complexity of individual and collective experiences.

For educators, “The World at War” offers an invaluable didactic resource, not only for its historical rigor but also for its ability to generate empathy and understanding of the human realities behind the facts. The series can be used to illustrate a wide variety of topics, such as the causes and consequences of the war, the political and social dynamics of the time, military



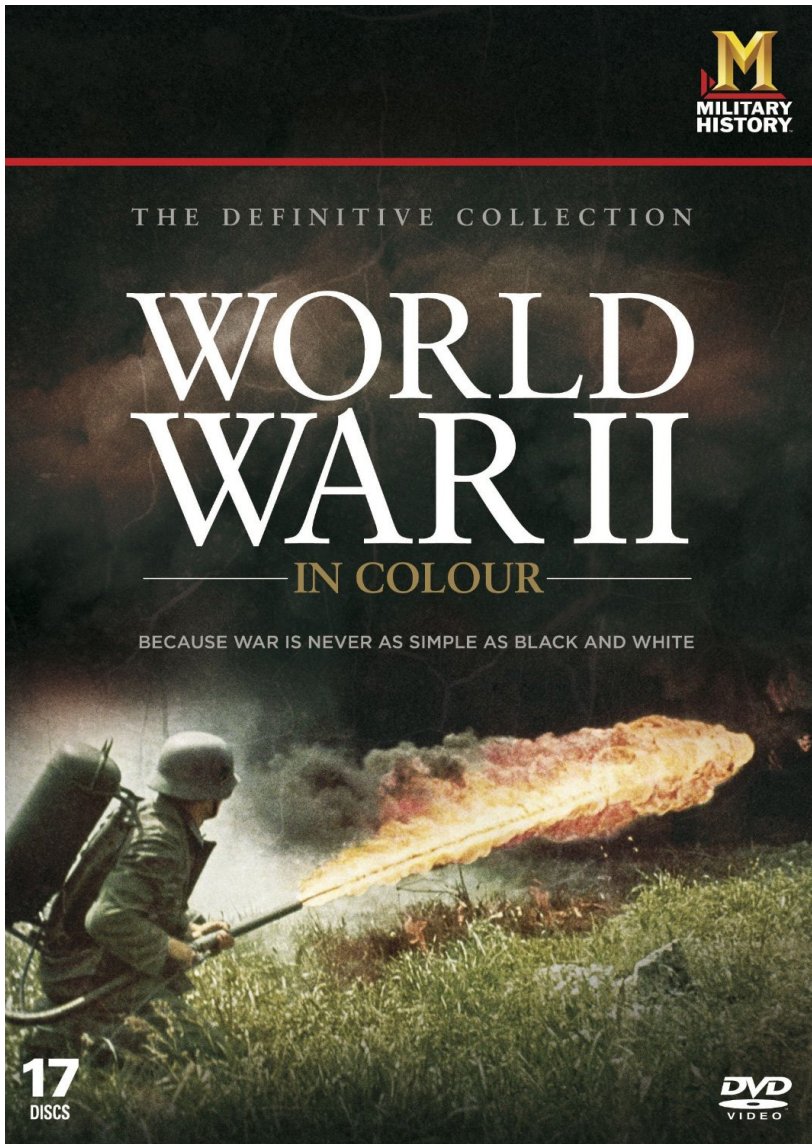
technology, life on the front and at home, as well as the moral and ethical lessons derived from the conflict.

Additionally, the documentary's companion book by Mark Arnold-Forster offers students and teachers an additional resource for delving deeper into the subject. This supplemen-

tary material can serve as a basis for class discussions, research papers, and other pedagogical activities, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the period. The recognition of “The World at War” with an Emmy Award underscores its quality and impact. As a tool for teaching history, this documentary not only informs about the events of World War II but also promotes critical reflection on the causes and effects of conflicts, the nature of power and politics, and the importance of memory and history in shaping our present and future.

“World War II in Colour,” created in 2005 by Pacific Media / Suevia Films, emerges as an invaluable didactic resource for teaching this critical period of contemporary history. This documentary is distinguished by its comprehensive approach to exploring the political, social, and human dimensions of the conflict, offering students a deep and nuanced understanding of World War II. Through the use of real footage, “World War II in Colour” succeeds in transporting viewers to the heart of the events, providing an immersive and authentic experience. This visual approach not only enriches the historical narrative but also fosters a deeper emotional connection with the events, facilitating more meaningful and enduring learning.

The biography of the leaders who played decisive roles in the battles is another cornerstone of this documentary, allowing for a detailed analysis of the key figures on both sides of the conflict. By focusing on the personalities of the leaders, “World War II in Colour” offers a window into the strategic decisions, motivations, and mistakes that defined the course of the war. This approach humanizes the study of history, encouraging stu-



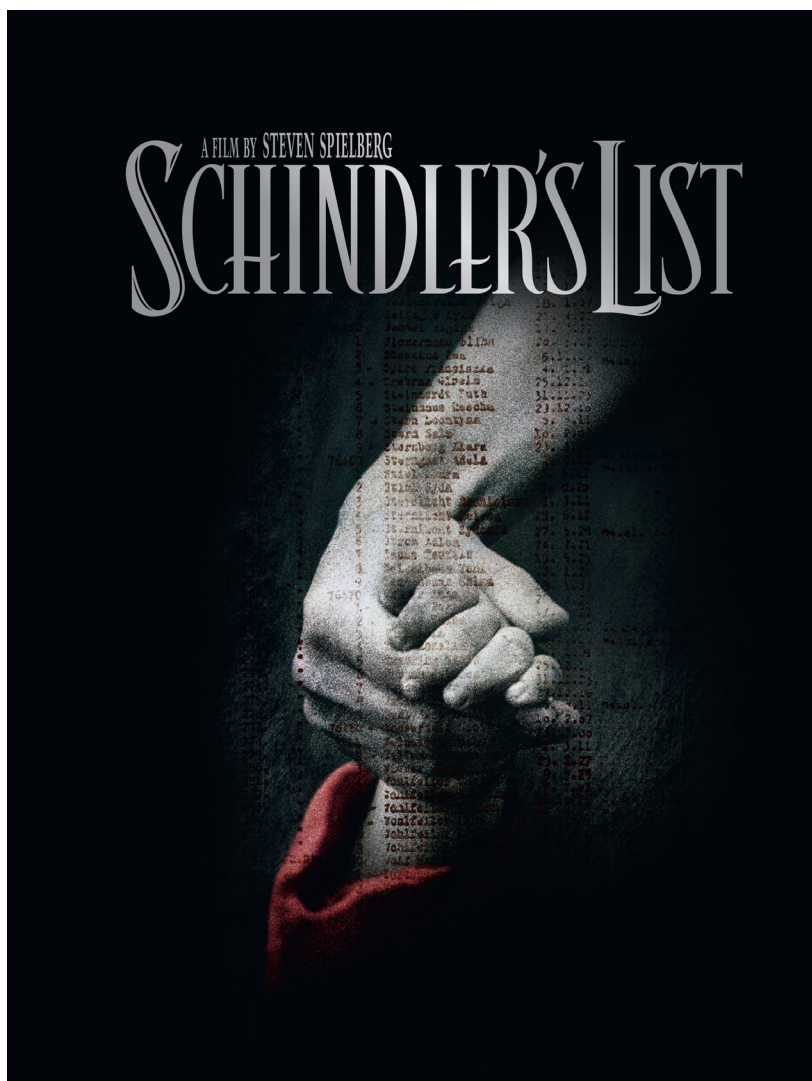
dents to understand the complexity of decisions and the consequences of the actions of specific individuals.

For educators, this documentary represents a versatile tool that can be used to address a variety of educational topics related to the war, including geopolitics, international alliances, military technology, the impact on civilian populations, and post-conflict lessons learned. Integrating this audiovisual material into the curriculum can stimulate critical thinking, debate, and empathy among students, offering multiple perspectives and encouraging critical analysis of sources.

In conclusion, this documentary not only serves to inform about historical facts but also invites reflection on the causes and effects of conflicts, the value of peace, and the importance of historical memory in preventing future tragedies. By doing so, this documentary becomes an essential educational tool that enriches the teaching and learning of history, promoting a deeper and more humanized understanding of one of the most complex and defining periods of the 20th century.

“Schindler’s List,” directed by Steven Spielberg in 1993, has established itself as an essential cinematic piece for teaching World War II and the Holocaust. This film, based on the novel “Schindler’s Ark” by Thomas Keneally, offers a deeply moving and educational narrative about one of the darkest chapters of human history through the real story of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman who saved approximately 1,100 Polish Jews from Nazi extermination. The film is particularly valuable for historical education for several reasons.

First, it humanizes the Holocaust by focusing on the individual stories of those who survived thanks to Schindler. In doing so, “Schindler’s List” provides an intimate and personal pers-



pective on genocide that goes beyond numbers and statistics, allowing students to understand the human impact of these events. Second, Schindler's transformation from an opportunist businessman benefiting from the war to a life saver provi-

des a powerful character study on morality, compassion, and personal change. This approach offers a solid foundation for class discussions on ethics, responsibility, and the potential for good within complex and often brutal historical contexts.


Similarly, “Schindler’s List” does not merely recount the horrors of the Holocaust but also addresses themes of resistance, survival, and humanity’s capacity to act with great courage and altruism. This allows educators to address concepts of human resilience, solidarity, and the importance of historical memory. Moreover, the film stands out for its historical accuracy, attention to detail, and effective use of cinematic elements, such as the choice to film in black and white, which adds a level of authenticity and gravity to the narrative. This can be used by educators to discuss how history is represented through cinema, including the artistic and narrative decisions that influence the interpretation of past events.

Finally, “Schindler’s List” is not only an educational resource for teaching about the Holocaust and World War II but also offers universal lessons on ethics, compassion, and the capacity for individual change. By integrating this film into the curriculum, educators can facilitate deep and meaningful learning, promoting critical dialogue and empathy among students in the face of one of history’s most tragic moments.

“Life is Beautiful,” directed by Roberto Benigni in 1997, is an Italian drama that offers a poignant and unique perspective on the Holocaust, becoming a deep pedagogical tool for teaching history and human rights studies. This film, starring Benigni himself as Guido Orefice, a Jewish man who uses his imagination and humor to protect his son from the horrors of

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a Nazi concentration camp, blends comedy and tragedy to explore themes of love, sacrifice, and the resilience of the human spirit against oppression.

In the first half of “Life is Beautiful,” the political change taking place in Italy is shown. Six years later, in 1945, Guido and Dora are married and have a son, Giosuè. Despite the war and the Nazi invasion of Italy, they maintain their happiness. During Giosuè’s birthday, Guido, his uncle, and Giosuè are detained for their Jewish origin and sent to a concentration camp. Dora, though not Jewish, insists on boarding the train to be with her family. In the camp, men and women are separated, and many are sent to the gas chambers. Guido protects Giosuè from the cruel reality by turning it into a game where they must earn points to win a tank. He warns that crying, asking for food, or wanting to see his mother will cause them to lose points, while hiding from the guards adds extra points.

Despite the surroundings of horror and death, Giosuè believes in his father’s story and in his innocence. In the end, Guido asks Giosuè to hide until things calm down; while he looks for Dora to escape together, but he is captured and executed. The next day, with the Germans fled and the prisoners freed, Giosuè comes out of hiding and meets an American soldier who takes him in his tank. On the way, he reunites with his mother, happy because his father was right: they won the game.

From an educational perspective, “Life is Beautiful” can be used to address complex historical, ethical, and emotional issues associated with World War II and the Holocaust in an accessible and emotive way. By presenting the story through Guido’s

eyes, the film allows students to explore the realities of genocide and war, while emphasizing the importance of humanity, hope, and love. The film's multifaceted character, which includes elements of humor within a tragic context, offers a unique opportunity to discuss with students how art and literature can address difficult topics in unconventional ways. The film also provides a starting point for debates about resilience in the face of adversity, the importance of protecting innocence, and how individual perception can be used as a mechanism for survival and resistance.

"Life is Beautiful" can also be used to foster discussions on European history, fascism, racism, and persecution, as well as on universal values of dignity and respect for life. The narrative offers a platform to explore the impact of the Holocaust on individual lives and society, and how the legacy of these events continues to affect the contemporary world. The film has been acclaimed for its ability to treat a dark subject with delicacy and humor, making it particularly valuable for introducing difficult topics in the classroom in a way that is both accessible and deeply emotive. By using "Life is Beautiful" as an educational resource, teachers can help students develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of history while promoting empathy, ethical reflection, and critical thinking.

"The Pianist," a profound drama directed by Roman Polanski and starring Adrien Brody, is based on the memoirs of Polish-Jewish musician Wladyslaw Szpilman, offering a harrowing account of survival, loss, and human resilience during World War II. The film not only narrates Szpilman's personal story and

his struggle to survive in devastated Warsaw under Nazi occupation but also offers a window into the collective experience of the Jewish people in Poland, marked by forced isolation, persecution, and extreme violence.

For teaching history, “The Pianist” becomes an invaluable educational tool, allowing students to explore the complexities of World War II from a human and personal perspective. The film offers a profound reflection on the consequences of hate, discrimination, and war, as well as the human spirit’s capacity to face adversity. Through the lens of Szpilman’s life, students can gain a more intimate understanding of the Holocaust and Nazi occupation, beyond general facts and figures. The depiction of the gradual degradation of living conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto, along with scenes of violence and the daily struggle for survival, provides an emotional and psychological context that textbooks do not always convey.

Additionally, “The Pianist” offers numerous opportunities to discuss themes related to morality, ethics, and the difficult decisions faced by individuals in times of war. The film also highlights the importance of culture, music, and art as forms of resistance and affirmation of humanity in the face of barbarism. By integrating “The Pianist” into the history curriculum, educators can foster the development of critical thinking skills, empathy, and a deeper understanding of historical events. The film motivates students to consider the personal stories behind global conflicts and reflect on the lessons we can learn from history to build a more compassionate and fair future.

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“Downfall,” a German film released in 2004, offers an intense and detailed look at the last days of Adolf Hitler and the end of the Third Reich, based on the memoirs of Traudl Junge, Hitler’s perso-

nal secretary, and the eponymous book narrating the Nazi regime's collapse. This film presents a unique opportunity for teaching contemporary history, especially useful for addressing the end of World War II and the impact of Nazism in Germany and the world.

The educational utility of "Downfall" lies in its ability to humanize a historical period often portrayed in abstract or statistical terms. By focusing on Hitler and his inner circle during the last days before his suicide, the film demystifies the Nazi leader and shows him in a state of despair and defeat, providing a counterpoint to the image of absolute power often associated with him. This can help students understand the complexity of history and historical figures, avoiding excessive simplifications.

"Downfall" is also relevant for discussing themes such as morality in times of war, the psychology of Nazism's leaders and followers, and the consequences of extremist ideology. The portrayal of life inside the bunker, combined with the scenes of chaos and destruction in Berlin, offers a realistic view of the devastating impact of war on individuals and societies. Additionally, the film can serve as a starting point for debates on historical responsibility, collective memory, and how society remembers and processes its past. Traudl Junge's figure, who reflects on her role in the Nazi regime and her unaware or involuntary complicity, can motivate discussions on personal and collective ethics in situations of authoritarianism and conflict.

Lastly, "Downfall" is notable for its attention to historical detail, from the clothing and dialogues to the recreation of Hitler's bunker, contributing to its educational value. By offering an accurate and captivating portrayal of a crucial moment in

Jorge FymarkVidovic López, Dayanet Jussy Chourio López



history, the film becomes a valuable didactic resource for fostering a deeper understanding of World War II, the end of Nazism, and the lessons we can learn for the present and future.

“Valkyrie,” directed by Bryan Singer, is a historical drama based on the bold but failed coup attempt against Adolf Hitler by German officers in 1944, led by Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg. This film offers a unique window into the resistance efforts within Nazi Germany, a less explored but crucial topic for understanding the complexity of World War II and the internal dynamics of the Nazi regime. Based on a true story, Tom Cruise portrays Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, a proud military officer and loyal official who loves his country but watches in horror as Hitler’s rise triggers World War II.

As he continues his military career, he hopes someone will find a way to stop Hitler before Europe and Germany are shattered. However, realizing time is running out, Stauffenberg decides to take action and, in 1942, attempts to persuade the most experienced commanders of the Eastern Front to confront and overthrow Hitler. Stauffenberg joins the German Resistance, an old anti-Hitler civilian conspiracy composed of men hidden in the highest positions of power. This group conspired to murder the dictator and overthrow the Nazi government, employing the ingenious strategy of using Hitler’s emergency plan to stabilize the government in case of his death. The assassination attempt took place on July 20, 1944, but failed, and those involved in the conspiracy were executed.

The utility of “Valkyrie” in teaching history lies in its ability to illustrate the existence of German opposition to Hitler, challenging the notion of total conformity within Germany to the Nazi regime. Through the film’s plot, students can learn about the diversity of German responses to Nazism, including the re-



sistance actions that actively sought to overthrow Hitler, which is essential for a nuanced understanding of German and European history during this period.

The film also highlights the importance of ethical and moral decision-making in times of war, portraying von Stauffenberg and his co-conspirators as individuals faced with profound dilemmas, forced to choose between their loyalty to the State and their personal conscience. This offers a rich opportunity for classroom debate on issues of ethics, loyalty, patriotism, and resistance. Additionally, “Valkyrie” can be used to discuss resistance strategies and the reasons for the plot’s failure, allowing students to critically analyze the political, military, and social conditions that limited opposition to the Nazi regime. The detailed reconstruction of the events leading up to July 20, 1944, and the immediate consequences of the failed coup, provide a solid foundation for studying the challenges faced by the German resistance.

Lastly, the film is a valuable educational resource for exploring World War II narratives that go beyond the battlefield, including political intrigue, ethical conflicts, and personal stories of those within Germany who fought against Nazism from inside. By doing so, “Valkyrie” enriches students’ understanding of the war, offering diverse perspectives and encouraging critical analysis of one of contemporary history’s most complex moments.

“The Book Thief,” directed by Brian Percival and released in 2013, is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Markus Zusak that immerses the viewer in World War II Germany from

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the perspective of Liesel Meminger, masterfully portrayed by Sophie Nélisse. The film tells the story of a young girl who discovers the comfort and power of words while facing the horrors of Nazism, developing deep friendships through her passion for reading. Liesel forms a special bond with Max, a Jewish refugee hidden by her adoptive family, and Rudy, her neighbor, who falls in love with her. Percival's ability to balance tenderness and tragedy makes this work a moving cinematic experience, noted not only for the emotional performances of its cast, including Geoffrey Rush and Emily Watson, but also for its impactful scenery that faithfully recreates the depicted era.

The film stands as a testament to the transformative power of books and how they can offer escape and hope even in the darkest times. Through Liesel's narrative, "The Book Thief" explores the ability of words to bring light in times of despair, weaving a story that is both a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit and a reflection on the brutality of war. Percival's direction, along with evocative cinematography and a delicate soundtrack, perfectly complements the emotional journey of the characters, leaving an indelible mark on the audience. With its release in 2013, this film not only captured the hearts of viewers but also established itself as a significant work that addresses themes of courage, loss, and redemption.

4.2 Results and Comments on the Screenings

The students' feedback on the films and documentaries demonstrated that cinema as a didactic resource contributes to and facilitates meaningful learning processes. However, a cer-

tain detachment was detected towards documentaries considered too lengthy and somewhat boring. According to some comments, students prefer more recent documentaries, like those promoted by the television network HBO and other commercial channels, with shorter durations. When asked about their appreciation of documentaries related to World War II, they mentioned, instead of documentaries, television series such as “Band of Brothers” and “The Pacific,” produced and directed by Steven Spielberg, as well as other series like “The Tudors” and “Spartacus.”

As discussed, in terms of film presentations, students prefer science fiction and war genre movies, known as commercial cinema. However, since the films presented met this expectation, the results were favorable, as students showed attention and reacted positively to the questions and concerns raised during the discussion through the film forum. In both cases, what was projected through the documentaries and films was compared with books containing information on the same topic. Learning proved to be more significant when studied with the support of cinema than when studying the same historical process without the use of screenings.

4.3 Recommendations Regarding the Audiovisual Exercise

When selecting a film or documentary, we must consider technical aspects such as the duration of the screening, the year of production of the audiovisual, and the target audience. For example, it would be pointless to present some documentaries

like “The World at War” and “World War II in Colour” to high school students, because they are too lengthy or because the narrative documentary format is boring to them and is in black and white. In this case, it is most advisable that the documentary does not exceed one hour of screening time.

For university students, documentaries proved to be more useful because they see them as historical documents rich in information. Despite this, it is most advisable to project the lengthy documentaries at home and leave a prudent amount of time to discuss them in class; perhaps this could be included as part of a final assignment. Documentaries with an average duration between 45 minutes and one hour can be easily shared in the classroom.

The strength of the documentary is that it almost always shows real images of certain historical events. In the case of the proposed documentaries and films, it should be noted that both show raw images of the concentration camps and what World War II represented for the Jews, Poles, and even for the Germans themselves and the countries dominated by Adolf Hitler.

It may happen that some documentaries have a strong ideological orientation. In this sense, the teacher must be present throughout the process to intervene when necessary. It is advisable not to interrupt during the screening of the film and guide students to make their interventions at the end of it. Likewise, it is advised to avoid fiction films, as they present a mix of reality and fantasy that can confuse students. Instead, it is suggested to select films whose script is an adaptation of novels or history books, also considering the director’s track record on documentary topics.

It is possible to choose films that offer a partial view of the historical process studied. It is important to point out the ideological stance of the film's director and screenwriter, and if possible, present two documentaries or films on the same topic that show opposing ideological stances. This will enrich the discussion if there is good mediation by the teacher. In this sense, students should be instructed to take note of doubts or concerns to form work teams then, where they can express their comments and, finally, share with the rest of the students the knowledge acquired. This will encourage socialization and generate conclusions about the learning method and the topic studied.

Finally, for this section, it is absolutely necessary to motivate students to value the study of history through audiovisual resources, especially when dealing with groups that may not initially appreciate the proposal, which could negatively influence the learning process.

Final Considerations

The importance of integrating cinema and documentaries into education, particularly in the teaching of history, cannot be underestimated. This didactic strategy, when applied with discernment and clear pedagogical guidance, has the potential to significantly enrich the learning process. It is essential to recognize students' openness to consuming historical documentaries and films from diverse cinematic traditions, not limiting themselves exclusively to American commercial productions. The richness of cinema from countries like India, China, Japan, Italy, and much of Latin America deserves special attention. These productions, often awarded at international competitions other than the Oscars, offer unique and enriching perspectives that contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of history.

The use of documentaries as an educational tool presents its own challenges and opportunities. While documentaries should not be assumed to be an absolute reflection of reality—since every representation is influenced by its creator's vision and the narrative and technical limitations of the medium—their value

lies in the use of original material that provides an aesthetically valuable narrative. This is particularly true in contexts where written records are limited or at risk of disappearing.

The diversity of film productions available nationally and internationally opens a vast field of possibilities for teaching history. It is advisable to take advantage of local film productions, which can offer visions deeply rooted in a country's culture and history. In Venezuela, for example, the work of directors like Luis Alberto Lamata and Román Chalbaud has been crucial in depicting historical moments. Similarly, at the Latin American level, films like "The Feast of the Goat" and "Zapata: The Dream of the Hero" play a vital role in strengthening historical awareness.

Films not only capture elements of the historical context but also offer a particular interpretation of society and its individuals. These cinematic representations become a source of collective memory, providing historians and students tools to understand the complexity of past events and their impact on contemporary society.

Selecting audiovisual material for the history classroom, far from being an arduous task, is an opportunity for educators to demonstrate their pedagogical and intuitive skills. The choice of content should be guided by learning objectives and the historical relevance of the material. Films like "Schindler's List" and "The Pianist" offer a deep immersion into the theme of World War II, unlike productions like "Captain America" or "Pearl Harbor," which, although popular, may focus more on entertainment than on historical fidelity.

In conclusion, cinema and documentaries represent invaluable pedagogical resources in teaching history, allowing for a richer and more diverse understanding of our past. The inclusion of both commercial and independent, national and international productions enriches the educational curriculum, providing students with a window into various interpretations of history. This approach not only complements text-based education but also promotes critical thinking and empathy, preparing students to navigate the complex contemporary world with an informed and nuanced understanding of the past.

Recommendations for Teachers

To effectively integrate cinema into history teaching, it's crucial that educators make a careful selection of material. Thoroughly researching the historical accuracy and production context of films or documentaries will facilitate the choice of educational and reliable resources. Moreover, diversifying sources is essential; including productions from different cultures and countries can offer a broader and more diverse perspective on history. These productions, recognized at various international competitions, can be as valuable as those awarded by the Oscars, enriching the educational experience with global views and varied critiques.

Before viewing, teachers should prepare students by providing the necessary historical context, which may include discussions about the period, main characters, and key events. Creating a viewing guide with specific questions will help students reflect on important aspects during the film. This approach encourages critical thinking and keeps the focus on relevant historical themes. After viewing the material, organi-

zing class debates to discuss historical representations is crucial. These debates can encourage students to express their opinions and contrast them with what they've learned through texts and other sources, thus promoting deep critical analysis.

Teaching students to critically analyze films from different angles, including historical content, narrative, and cinematic aspects, is a key pedagogical skill. Additionally, take advantage of streaming platforms and online resources can significantly broaden access to historical materials, offering a diversity of perspectives. Integrating cinema into interdisciplinary projects that connect history with other areas of knowledge can help understand it as a living discipline related to various facets of society and culture. This approach enriches learning and demonstrates the contemporary relevance of historical studies.

Using cinema to foster empathy and cultural understanding is also a powerful strategy. Films and documentaries can teach about human diversity and promote tolerance, bringing students closer to other cultures, eras, and human experiences in an emotive and profound way. Finally, developing reflection and assessment activities that allow students to express how their understanding of a specific historical topic has changed or expanded is essential. This can include essays, oral presentations, or creative projects, encouraging critical reflection and evaluation of the learning acquired through cinema.

Implementing these recommendations sequentially not only enriches the teaching of history but also promotes more interactive and reflective learning. Incorporating cinema as an educational tool facilitates the understanding of the present in

light of the past, preparing students for a more complex and nuanced understanding of history and its lessons.

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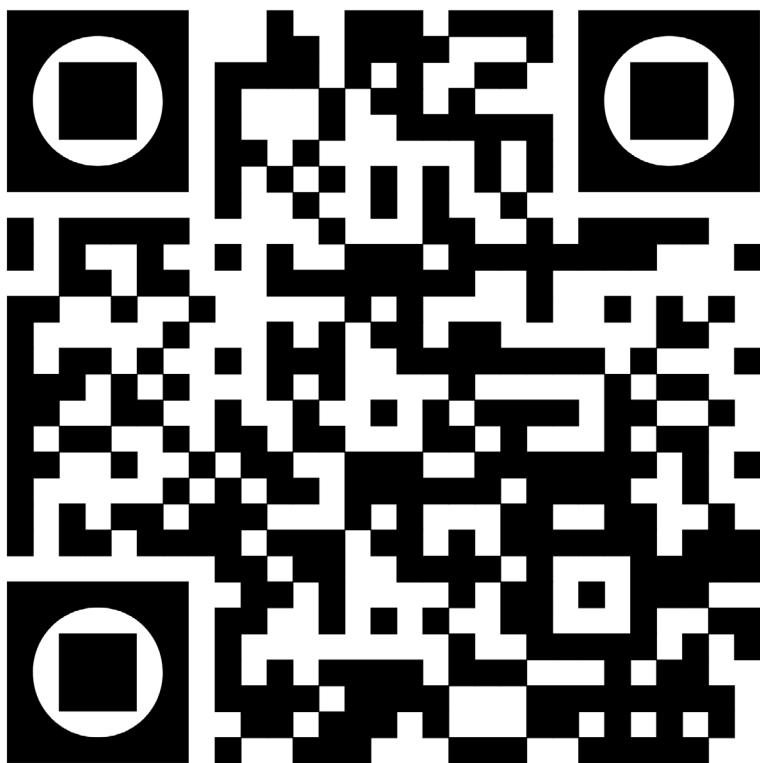
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This paper seeks to explore the advantages of cinema as a didactic tool in history teaching. It analyzes the origins of cinematography and the effects it has on the viewer. The theoretical basis relies on perspectives from specialists in the cinematic field, and previous experiences are drawn upon through the use of cinema forums as a learning tool. In practice, a lesser preference for long and old documentaries was observed, with a greater receptivity towards documentaries and films produced by commercial companies. Likewise, it was confirmed that learning is more meaningful when supported by audiovisual resources. Finally, there is reflection on the significance of educating through cinema, and guidance is provided for the promotion of documentaries and other audiovisual productions.

