

The Cinema in the History Classroom: Why Watching *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain*?

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Verónica Pellegrino

Universidad de Villa María

Villa María, Córdoba, Argentina

veronica.pellegrino@gmail.com

Abstract:

The didactic value of historical films is a topic long discussed by historians and film specialists such as Ferro (1991), Burke (2005), Rosenstone (1988), Caparrós (2007), and Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003). Taking into consideration the theoretical contributions of these and other scholars, as educators in the subject Perspectives on the Present World, annual fourth year course of the English Teacher Training Program, we decided to develop a project to work systematically with audiovisual materials to complement the instruction of the historical contents outlined in the syllabus. In the present paper we focus on the experience carried out with the movie *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* (2014), included to illustrate some aspects of the topic of globalization. We present the most relevant reasons that drove us to adopt films as didactic resources as we proceed to explain the experience with the viewing and later debate of the movie about the tragedy of Bhopal. A brief summary of the case of the chemical disaster and of the film based on such catastrophe are provided before communicating the process implemented for the viewing and analysis of the movie, as well as of the results of the survey applied to assess the activity.

Das Kino im Geschichtsunterricht: Warum sollte man Bhopal: ein Gebet für Regen sehen?

Abstract: Der didaktische Wert der Geschichtsfilme wurde seit langer Zeit von Historikern und Filmfachleuten wie Marc Ferro (1991), Peter Burke (2005), Robert Rosenstone (1988), José María Caparrós (2007) und Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003), unter anderen mehr, analysiert. Unter Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Beiträge von diesen und anderen Akademikern wurde ein Projekt im Rahmen des Faches *Perspektiven der aktuellen Welt* – ein Jahressfach von dem Lehrplan des Lehramts in Englisch an der Universität - entwickelt, um mit audiovisuellem Material systematisch zu arbeiten, damit die Lehre von dem im Lehrplan umfassenden Geschichtslerninhalten ergänzt werden kann. Die vorliegende Arbeit befasst sich mit dem Film *Bhopal: ein Gebet für Regen* (2014) und auch mit einigen Aspekten der Frage der globalen gegenseitige Abhängigkeit. An erster Stelle werden die wichtigsten Gründe zur Anwendung von Filmen als wertvolle didaktische Ressourcen dargestellt, dann werden die Erfahrung im Sehen und die nachfolgende Filmdebatte über das schreckliches Ende von Bhopal beleuchtet. Vor der Benennung des angewandten Verfahrens zum Sehen und der Filmanalyse im Unterricht werden eine kurze Zusammenfassung der Chemie-Katastrophe und des auf diese Katastrophe basierenden Filmes sowie der Ergebnisse der Umfrage zur Bewertung der Aufgabe dargelegt.

Le cinéma dans les classes d'Histoire: Pourquoi regarder Bhopal : Une prière pour la pluie ?

Résumé: La valeur didactique des films historiques est un sujet qui a été étudié longtemps par des historiens et des spécialistes du cinéma tels que Marc Ferro (1991), Peter Burke (2005), Robert Rosenstone (1988), José María Caparrós (2007) et Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003), entre autres. En prenant en considération les contributions théoriques de ces chercheurs et d'autres, en tant qu'éducateurs de la matière Perspectives du monde actuel, une matière de la quatrième année du Programme de formation du professorat d'Anglais de notre université, nous

Keywords:

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Schlagworte:

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avons décidé de développer un projet de travail systématique avec des matériaux audiovisuels pour compléter l'enseignement des contenus historiques définis dans le curriculum. Dans ce travail, nous nous concentrons spécifiquement sur le travail effectué avec le film *Bhopal: Une prière pour la pluie* (2014), même pour aborder certains aspects du thème de l'interdépendance mondiale. Dans la première section, nous présentons les raisons les plus pertinentes qui nous ont amenés à adopter des films comme des ressources didactiques précieuses au fur et à mesure que nous expliquons l'expérience avec la visualisation et le débat ultérieur du film sur la tragédie de Bhopal. Un bref résumé du cas de la catastrophe chimique et du film basé sur cette catastrophe est fourni avant de communiquer le processus mis en œuvre pour la visualisation et l'analyse du film dans la classe, ainsi que les résultats de l'enquête appliquée pour évaluer l'activité.

El cine en las clases de historia: ¿Por qué mirar a Bhopal: una oración por la lluvia?

Palabras clave:
película histórica,
educación, historia,
tragedia de Bhopal

Resumen: El valor didáctico de las películas históricas es un tema que ha sido investigado durante mucho tiempo por historiadores y especialistas en cine como Marc Ferro (1991), Peter Burke (2005), Robert Rosenstone (1988), José María Caparrós (2007) y Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003), entre muchos otros. Tomando en consideración las contribuciones teóricas de estos y otros académicos, como educadores en la asignatura Perspectivas del mundo presente, una materia anual del cuarto año del Programa de formación de profesorado de inglés en nuestra universidad, decidimos desarrollar un proyecto para trabajar sistemáticamente con materiales audiovisuales para complementar la instrucción de los contenidos históricos delineados en el plan de estudios. En el presente trabajo nos centramos específicamente en el trabajo realizado con la película *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* (2014), incluso para tratar algunos aspectos del tema de la interdependencia global. En la primera sección, presentamos las razones más relevantes que nos impulsaron a adoptar películas como valiosos recursos didácticos a medida que procedemos a explicar la experiencia con la visualización y posterior debate de la película sobre la tragedia de Bhopal. Se proporciona un breve resumen del caso del desastre químico y de la película basada en dicha catástrofe antes de comunicar el proceso implementado para la visualización y el análisis de la película en la clase, así como de los resultados de la encuesta aplicada para evaluar la actividad.

O cinema nas aulas história: Por que assistir Bhopal: uma oração pela chuva?

Palavras-chave:
filme histórico,
educação, história,
tragedia de Bhopal

Resumo: O valor didático dos filmes históricos é um assunto que foi investigado durante muito tempo por historiadores e especialistas do cinema como Marc Ferro (1991), Peter Burke (2005), Robert Rosenstone (1988), José María Caparrós (2007) y Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003), entre muitos outros. Tomando em consideração as contribuições teóricas desses e outros acadêmicos, como educadores na assinatura Perspectivas do mundo presente, uma matéria anual do quarto ano do Programa de Formação de Professores de Inglês em nossa universidade, decidimos desenvolver um projeto para trabalhar sistematicamente com materiais audiovisuais para complementar a instrução dos conteúdos históricos delineados na grade curricular. No presente trabalho nos centraremos especificamente no trabalho realizado com o filme *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* (2014), inclusive para tratar alguns aspectos do assunto da independência global. Na primeira seção, apresentamos as razões mais relevantes que nos impulsionam a adotar filmes como valioso recurso didático à medida que procedemos a explicar a experiência com a visualização e posterior debate do filme sobre a tragédia de Bhopal. Proporciona-se um breve resumo do caso do desastre químico e de um filme baseada em dita catástrofe antes de comunicar o processo implementado para a visualização e análise do filme na aula, assim como dos resultados da enquete aplicada para avaliar a atividade.

Il Cinema nella Lezione di Storia: Perché Vedere Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain?

Riassunto: Il valore didattico dei film di storia è una tematica che è stata ricercata da lungo dagli storici e specialisti di film tali come Marc Ferro (1991), Peter Burke (2005), Robert Rosenstone (1988), José María Caparrós (2007), and Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez (2003), fra tanti altri. Prendendo in considerazione con molta cura i contributi teorici di questi ed altri studiosi, come educatori nella materia Prospettive del Mondo Presente, materia annuale del quarto anno del Programma di Formazione di Insegnanti d'Inglese presso la nostra università, abbiamo deciso di sviluppare un progetto per lavorare sistematicamente con materiali audiovisivi da complementare con l'istruzione dei contenuti di storia del programma di studio. In questa sede infochiamo specificamente sul lavoro portato avanti con il film *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* (2014), che ha da fare con alcuni aspetti della tematica dell'interdipendenza globale. Nella prima sezione, presentiamo le ragioni più rilevanti che ci portarono ad adottare dei film in quanto risorse di valore didattico e procediamo a spiegare l'esperienza di vedere il film seguito da un dibattito su esso che riguarda la tragedia di Bhopal. Si provvede una breve sintesi del caso del disastro chimico e del film basato su quella catastrofe prima di comunicare il processo applicato per vedere ed analizzare il film in classe, oltre al risultato dello studio applicato per accedere all'attività.

Parole chiave:

film storico, educazione, storia, tragedia di Bhopal

Introduction

Historical events

Historical cinema

The growth of the movie production has been one of the most remarkable mass media developments of the 20th and 21st centuries. Along history, thanks to the astonishing speed of the evolution of technology, this industry has turned into a powerful means to reproduce and disseminate a wide variety of cultural contents. The cinema, with its appealing narrative structures and elaborate techniques, has been able to reach large masses and to popularize themes that had previously been reserved for selected academic crowds. Historical events have been some of the most attractive topics for filmmakers to portray and for large and diverse audiences to consume. In his article about reflections on the usefulness of the historical cinema, the author, Alberto Bornstein Sánchez, asserts that the historical cinema is the heir of the nineteenth century historical novel, pointing out that history and fiction have always been a good match, and that the movie industry has shown interest in portraying the past since its early beginnings. As a proof of the great popularity of the genre, one should just pay some attention to the vast number of historical movies released in about a century of the motion picture's life (1991: 277-278).

Worthy didactic resources

When studying about historical films, one comes across varied descriptions and characterizations of the genre, from very simple conceptualizations to quite elaborate and complex ones (Bornstein Sánchez, 1991: 278). For the purpose of our academic project, we decided to adopt José María Caparrós Lera's definition of historical *reconstitution* films, those that within the great spectrum of historical movies "(...) which, with a direct desire from their makers to 'make history,' evoke a historical period or event, reconstituting it with more or less rigor, within the subjective vision of each director, of their authors" (2007: 34). The value of such films to provide valid representations of historical past events has long been discussed and analyzed by specialists on the topic such as the historians and film specialists Marc Ferro and Robert Rosenstone (Caparrós Lera, 2007: 26 - 29). As History educators we strongly agree with Caparrós Lera's and with Ferro's understanding and justifications of why historical films have become immensely worthy didactic resources to complement other type of sources. We should take advantage of the technological advances of this era, fast and affordable access to digital materials, to incorporate these audiovisual products to enrich the content of our classes and to promote and develop critical thinking skills in our students.

There are a number of reasons to consider the adoption of films as teaching resources to encourage and support the teaching and learning of historical contents. As the historian Fabio Nigra points out, for most individuals, history is normally understood as a collection of names, dates, and facts that have to be memorized, something really boring and tiresome, however, "the historical events narrated in movies act on the perception of

the average spectators as truthful events, and, of course, are not received as something tedious (...)” (2016: 43). An explanation for this interesting effect of these audiovisual products is addressed in Marc Ferro’s work. According to the specialist, who has carried out an extensive research on film as history, the fact that we spend more time watching movies or television than reading books is causing that “in our brain the way of apprehension of things is more and more an audiovisual type of reaction rather than the reaction it traditionally used to have”; that is to say that our brain is getting more and more accustomed to receiving, decoding, and recording information obtained from audiovisual materials rather than from plain texts. (Ferro, 1991: 1). In addition to Ferro’s idea, in his book *Visto y no Visto*, the British historian Peter Burke stresses the fact that “The power of a film relies on the fact that it gives the viewer the feeling that he is being an eyewitness to events” (2005: 202). This means that the cinema can bring history closer to the spectator in a unique way, one in which other types of texts cannot. Alberto Bornstein-Sánchez also argues that, given the accessibility of historic films and their importance as producers of knowledge, movies should be critically watched and analyzed in the History classes as complementary sources to written texts and the teacher’s explanations. (1991: 288). For the aforementioned specialists, films, as other cultural artifacts, decidedly contribute to give meaning to past phenomena, thus, in accordance with this perspective, we believe that they should not be excluded from the History courses as effective teaching and learning aids.

Audiovisual materials, particularly historical movies, are ideal tools to bring to the History classroom because they offer students and educators the possibility of analyzing complex events from several angles and perspectives, which provides a more meaningful and memorable approach to learning and appreciating historical and social events. “To watch is to think with the eyes,” stated the Spanish philosopher Julián Marías (Basallo, 2016: 10). Films allow the audience to know more than just the facts of a certain event, movies are windows to explore the human nature; they are instruments to analyze manhood, to inquire about human life. As Rosenstone explains: “Films let us see landscapes, hear sounds, witness strong emotions as they are expressed with body and face, or view physical conflict between individuals and groups. Without denigrating the power of the written word, one can claim for each medium unique powers of representation” (1988: 99).

The systematic and reflexive viewing of films in the History classroom may contribute not only to the deeper understanding of certain multifaceted topics, but also to the development of critical thinking skills and to the promotion of values. As Enrique Martínez-Salanova Sánchez explains: “the cinema enters, invents, reproduces or investigates on human life and its conflicts, about the hates and the loves of the people, analyzing in detail the mechanisms that move the human species” (2003: 48). The introduction of movies to complement the teaching of historical content widens the

The power of a film

To watch is to think with the eyes

The cinema enters, invents, reproduces or investigates

range of possibilities for students to better grasp and internalize historical information that might otherwise be a mere collection of data, which may seem alien, distant, and somehow irrelevant to their reality. That is so because beyond the nude factual reality, through their narratives, films portray and convey human situations that mobilize emotions, a fact that makes it possible for the audience to approach and to anchor new knowledge in a compelling manner; to make sense of others' realities, and to foster a deeper analysis and reflection on specific topics.

The selection

After thorough research, bearing in mind the foretold advantages of using films in the History classes, the professors in charge of the course *Perspectives on the Present World*, of the English Teacher Training Program, at Universidad Nacional de Villa María, decided to include the systematic viewing and analysis of a variety of audiovisual materials, comprising mainly historical movies. The research team carried out a careful selection of films to supplement and support the course bibliography for some particular contents in the syllabus. The selection of the films was based on their educational power, that is to say: whether they had a strong connection with other materials of the course; if they offered interesting perspectives on the subjects to be studied, insights on the topics that could be motivating and engaging for the students; and whether they offered the possibility of opening enriching debates after the viewings and/or of performing other meaningful follow-up tasks.

Analysis and debate

Globalization is one of the most complex and controversial issues in the course due to its various facets and dimensions. Out of a number of about ten documentaries and films, the 2014 British-Indian film *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain*, directed and produced by Ravi Kumar, was chosen to analyze some of the negative effects of the process and evolution of global interdependence. The analysis and debate of this historical drama film is an excellent source not only to reveal and criticize a dreadful past event, but also to raise awareness in present and future generations. The tragedy that took place in the Indian city of Bhopal, in 1984, is considered as one of the world's worst chemical disasters, which exposes some of the darkest sides of globalization: the negative effects of outsourcing and of the widening of inequalities between developed and less-developed nations.

Synopsis

After the aforementioned introduction of some of our guiding theories about the usefulness of historical films as didactic resources, we will devote the next section of the article to present a concise narration of the events that led to one of the most devastating chemical disasters that took place in the second half of the twentieth century along with a synopsis of the movie chosen to illustrate it. In the final segment of the paper, we will render a brief explanation of the methodology employed in class to work with the film and of the results gathered with the survey, designed and implemented to assess the activity.

The case of the tragedy of Bhopal

By the 1960s, the American Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) had established a subsidiary company in India, which in the 1970s set up a pesticide production plant in a densely populated region of the city of Bhopal, as one of the measures to bring about the so expected “Green Revolution” in the country. The Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) was 50.9% owned by the UCC and 49.1% by various Indian investors, including public sector financial institutions. The factory produced a pesticide known as *carbaryl* using a poisonous organic compound named *methyl isocyanate* (MIC) that, as from 1980, was manufactured locally. This hazardous product reacts with water creating a highly toxic and deadly gas. The shanty towns continued to grow rapidly in the area surrounding the pesticide production plant, phenomenon fueled by the hopes poorer citizens had in finding jobs at the factory and by the ignorance of the risks the proximity to the plant posed to human health.

Due to extensive droughts that complicated agricultural productions in the region and the apparent inefficiency of the pesticides, the Indian subsidiary plant was not very successful (Eckerman, 2005: 3). As products’ sales dropped, the production of the poisonous MIC started to accumulate dangerously in the worn and malfunctioning storage tanks. In order to reduce expenses, the local managers at UCIL decided to dismiss qualified, skilled and experienced workers and technicians, and started hiring local unskilled laborers who received very little training and money for their hazardous jobs. The plant’s maintenance and repair services were extremely poor and shabby, and the safety measures, carefully taken into consideration in UCC plants placed in the US or in Europe, were completely disregarded at UCIL. As warning signs were not seriously considered by anyone, the factory had some tragic incidents before the actual disastrous event of 1984, caused by the faulty safety systems observed at the plant. The insignificant, practically inexistent, maintenance was attributed to a fall in the demand of the pesticides produced there.

On the night of December 3rd, 1984, a gas leakage, produced by the filtering of water into a tank containing levels of MIC beyond safety conditions, left 500,000 people, out of a total of 800,000 inhabitants, exposed to a toxic gas cloud (whose components are still in discussion) that polluted the air and soil of a vast zone surrounding the leakage area. In their own investigation report, the UCC admitted that all the safety measures and conditions to be operated had failed. There are at least four different theories regarding the causes of the tragedy. The hypotheses trying to explain the occurrence of such an event can be summarized using two words: “negligence and corruption”; as Eckerman, a member of the International Medical Commission on Bhopal, in her study, puts it: “[t]he catastrophe has become the symbol of negligence to human beings from transnational corporations” (2005: 2).

A pesticide known as carbaryl

The production of the poisons

The safety failed

Symbol of negligence from transnational corporations

The incident at Bhopal brings into the spotlight the inequalities present in the globalized world, not only in relation to the huge economic gap between the developed and the less developed nations, but also to the levels of injustice and suffering the poorest countries must endure.

The short, mid, and long-term effects of the tragedy were and still are outrageous. During the first weeks after the exposure to the gases, 8,000 people died and between 100,000 and 200,000 more were left with permanent injuries (Eckerman, 2005: 2). Generations of children born after the actual disaster have shown signs of serious health conditions, attributed to gas inhalation and the consumption of contaminated water, such as musculoskeletal disorders, twisted limbs and brain damage. The Bhopal chemical disaster shares the same characteristics found in other transnational accidents: apart from being a catastrophe that could have been avoided, it occurred in a country with poor or non-existent working and environmental regulations, where trade unions were weak or corrupt and health care systems highly deficient and unprepared to cope with such a dreadful situation. The companies “officials denied their responsibilities in the events and were able to obtain good economic or legal agreements whereas the victims” compensations, for the death of their relatives and the inflicted health problems, were absurdly meager. From the \$3.3 billion claimed by the Indian government in compensations, the UCC only paid \$430 million as part of an out-of-court settlement (Eckerman, 2005: 3). Since a significant amount of that money was kept by the Indian government, the money finally intended for the victims of the tragedy was totally inadequate (Dutta, 2007: 6 – 7). Warren Anderson, the CEO of UCC at the time of the tragedy, was charged with homicide by the Indian justice, but with the help of local authorities he fled the country to the United States, his homeland, and never faced trial as his country’s government disregarded the Indians’ extradition request.

The companies officials denied their responsibilities

The environmental tests that were carried out up to 2013 revealed worrisome information: the levels of mercury, trichlorethylene, MIC, and other chemicals associated with malformations and the development of cancer proved to be way over the safety standards (Eckerman, 2005: 11). After 30 years, citizens in Bhopal continue to endure the long lasting and terrible consequences of that tragic night and still claim for justice: justice for their lost loved ones and for those whose health and well-being have been severely damaged.

Citizens in Bhopal claim for justice

Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain, the movie

To complement the bibliographical material of the unit related to the global process of interaction and interdependence, which has been affecting people’s lives all over the world, the movie *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* was chosen to highlight some of the negative consequences of such process. Its historical significance lies on the fact that it uncovers a tremendous event, a consequence of the practice of outsourcing, which goes unknown

for most individuals. Under the direction of Ravi Kumar, an Indian director, writer and producer, the film, released in 2014, masterfully retells the events leading to the disaster at Bhopal in December, 1984. The movie revolves around the story of Dilip, who lives with his wife, son and sister in the crowded slum next to the UCIL pesticide plant, where, after persevering at what were portrayed as denigrating hiring processes, gets a low rank job. As the story evolves, Dilip is promoted to a higher vacant position for which he is ill-fitted since he lacks the skills and the adequate training to operate the dangerous and faulty factory equipment. Among other important characters portrayed in the movie is that of Motwani, a tabloid reporter who runs his own newspaper and who is the local voice, unheard and disregarded by the UCIL's workers and officials. The local journalist, who understands the contaminating effects of the factory and foresees a tragedy, opposes and criticizes the handling of the hazardous chemicals in the plant and the inefficient way in which the place is run.

The film accurately exposes the causes and the series of events that combined to bring about what came to be known as the worst global chemical disaster. However, beyond the facts and the precise technical information, Kumar offers the viewers an insight into an authentic human tragedy. Through the film, the audience is introduced into a forsaken world, victim of neglect, exploitation and corruption. The movie is a window to a part of the Indian culture and idiosyncrasy, whose narrative techniques play masterfully with the audience's emotions to put forward, and in plain sight, a catastrophe that, although it took place over three decades ago, should be remembered not only out of respect for the victims but also as a sign for alert for our present-day and future generations.

The viewers of *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* are taken into a ride of emotions raging from tenderness and sympathy to astonishment and dismay, which helps them make sense of a practically unknown event for most of them. Several reviews on the film posted on the website The Movie Database highlight the masterful play of emotions offered by Kumar, which converts his work into a memorable History lesson. To exemplify, we transcribe the excerpts of two comments made by two spectators: "The director Ravi Kumar has created a timeless masterpiece. After 30 years, the facts remain and the story revisited. *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* is not only beautifully written but the filmography delivers the reality of the topic and experiences. Take yourself back 30 years and live the disaster, feel the laughter and the pain" (The Internet Movie Database, n.d) pointed out one of the spectators and critics, while another one stated that "Ravi Kumar wrote and directed a beautiful movie! Yes, the subject matter was catastrophic and real people by the thousands were killed and tormented by the deceivers who created and managed the plant, nonetheless it was an engaging, good-humored, balanced revelation told in a way that is universal" (The Internet Movie Database, n.d).

Take yourself back 30 years
and live the disaster

Answering a set
of questions

Working with the movie in class

After an introductory class on the topic of globalization, the students who had signed up for our course were required to watch the movie and to complete a viewing guide by answering a set of questions based on the film as homework. In order to fulfill the task, the participants were given an entire week. The guide also provided the viewers with some links to reference materials for them to consult and expand their knowledge about the tragic event. A class debate was carried out in the following class period in which the answers to the questionnaire were discussed and analyzed. During this session students were encouraged to expose and defend their own opinions and perspectives on the issues discussed. All the attendants showed their willingness to participate by sharing their different, but well-informed and supported ideas on the matter. Once the debate was over, the students were asked to answer a three-part survey anonymously. The first section of the survey consisted of eight Lickert-type affirmations dealing with the value the students gave to the movie and the viewing guide as tools to contribute to their learning of the topic explored. The second part of the survey was based on some closed-ended questions in which students had to answer whether they had consulted the extra material recommended or not and, in case they had done so, how useful it had turned out for them. In the final section of the survey we included an additional space for the participants to write comments and suggestions if they felt like it.

Entertaining
and motivating movie

During the academic year, sixteen students registered to take the fourth-year subject of our English Teaching Training Program, *Perspectives on the Present World*, and fifteen of them participated of the debate and completed the survey handed to them after the activities. The score given to the propositions stated in the first section of the survey was, in general, very high. In this part, students were asked to rank the affirmative statements from 1 to 5 according to their level of agreement with each of them (1= strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree). In the section in which students had to value the post-viewing debate carried out in class the scores were also high and, according to the results gathered, we could conclude that *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* was considered an entertaining and motivating movie and that it was a suitable choice to deal with the topic of the negative impacts of the process globalization in our class.

The item related to the possibility the movie offered the audience to learn about remarkable cultural aspects of the community portrayed was also positively rated (4.06). The students highlighted their discovery and learning of cultural features related to religious celebrations and rites performed at wedding ceremonies, as well as some daily-life activities and social conventions of the Indian population displayed in the film.

The least valued proposition was the one that had to do with the linguistic usefulness of the movie, that is to say, whether the film had contri-

Students acquire and practice new vocabulary

Focused on the specific content

buted to the students' acquisition of new vocabulary items and expressions in English (3.33). Since our subject is part of an English Teacher Training Program, and one of the main course objectives is that our students acquire and practise new vocabulary and concepts, we considered it relevant to assess the movie also from its linguistic contributions to the class.

The table below shows the propositions as stated in the survey and the average rating the group of participants gave to them:

1. The movie is interesting	4.26
2. The movie is appropriate to illustrate the topic	4.6
3. The viewing of the movie has contributed to my understanding of the topic	4.4
4. The movie has helped me develop curiosity to continue learning about the topic	3.73
5. The post-viewing discussion in class has been interesting	3.90
6. The post-viewing discussion in class has been enriching	3.72
7. I learned about some cultural aspects I was not familiar with	4.06
8. Watching the movie has contributed to the acquisition of new vocabularies and expressions	3.33

Ten out of fifteen surveyed participants decided to include comments in the final section of the document. Three of them expressed that the viewing guide was helpful to get to understand and focus on the specific content; four students commented on how motivating the movie and the task were for them; seven, out of the ten, emphasized the fact that the audiovisual material chosen helped them understand better the process of outsourcing, how it is carried out in the global world, and the possible consequences of this practice when it is not regulated and controlled. One of the students expressed that the movie motivated him/her to keep on researching on the topic, and that they had specifically searched for news articles on the tragedy.

Concluding remarks

The positive experience with the movie *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* in the course Perspectives of the Present World, of the Teacher Training Program, encouraged us to continue doing research on the fruitful possibilities of working with audiovisual materials in our classes. *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain* resulted in an extremely clarifying, enriching, and motivating film which brings into light a rather hidden event and exposes some uncomfortable realities of the process of globalization.

A good selection of audiovisual materials to work in History lessons contribute to motivate our students a great deal and to enhance the learning/teaching experience in general. Historical movies are excellent tools

to deal with past events in meaningful and memorable ways. By appealing to an array of emotions, these materials contribute to motivate students and to help them build and anchor new knowledge. Furthermore, the guided watching and the additional discussion meetings help to promote and practise the audience's critical thinking skills.

Including historical movies in the History classes open a range of opportunities and advantages for both teachers and learners that we believe should be explored and taken into thoughtful consideration when planning our courses' syllabi.

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Anexo

Bhopal: A Prayer For Rain



Technical Specifications

Directed by:	Ravi Kumar
Year:	2014
Genre:	Drama
Produced by:	Kemal Akhtar, Leszek Burzynski, Pinaki Chatterjee, Steve Clark-Hall, Betsy Danbury, Sumant Pai, Smanto R. Roy, Michael Ryan, Patsy Santosham, Shail Shah, B.S. Narayan Swamy, Terrance Sweeney, Ravi Walia
Written by:	Ravi Kumar, David Brooks
Starring:	Mischa Barton ... Eva Gascon Martin Sheen ... Warren Anderson Kal Penn ... Motwani Tannishtha Chatterjee ... Leela Rajpal Yadav ... Dilip Satish Kaushik ... Chief Minister Fagun Thakrar ... Rekha Martin Brambach ... Ted Manoj Joshi ... Dr. Chandra Lisa Dwan ... Marika Venk Modur ... Dr. Khan
Music by:	Benjamin Wallfisch
Cinematography:	Anil Chandel, Charlie Wupperman
Artistic Direction:	Vivek Jadhav
Edited by:	Chris Gill, Maria Valente
Production company:	
Distributed by:	
Release Dates:	7 November 2014 (United States)
Running time:	1 h 43 minutes
Color:	Color
Country:	UK, India
Filming Location:	Los Angeles, California, USA
Language:	English, Hindi
Budget:	\$6.000.000 (estimated)
Box office:	\$5.948 (USA) (7 November 2014)

Synopsis

The film tells the story of the chemical tragedy that took place in Bhopal (India) in 1984, killing around 15,000 people and affecting the lives of about 600,000. The disaster occurred due to a gas leak from a pesticide plant, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), co-owned by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), an American company, and by Indian investors, including the government and government-controlled banks.

The movie narrates the story of a poor Indian worker who starts working at UCIL during the months prior to the toxic disaster. The film also portrays the lives, personal dilemmas and tragedies of multiple characters who are affected in different ways by this event.



Historical Significance

The value of the movie lies on the fact that it brings to light the practically unknown catastrophe that occurred in the city of Bhopal, in India, when around 600,000 people were exposed to the hazardous effects produced by the leak of methylisocyanate (MIC) gas in a pesticide plant of Union Carbide India Limited.

Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain portrays one of the darkest sides of global interdependence and can be a good educational tool to raise awareness about the dangers that may occur when corruption, outsourcing and social and economic inequality combine. The film also reveals how an event of such magnitude can be covered for the sake of protecting the economic interests of those who hold power, and at the same time how justice can be partial and almost inexistent.

Work Guide

1. Where is the pesticide plant located? Observe, analyze and describe the setting and the people portrayed.
2. Why do some of the inhabitants of Bhopal support UCIL despite being aware of the dangers it may bring to their health? Provide examples.
3. How do you feel about the attitude of the Indian manager of the plant towards his own people? Explain.
4. What are the roles of Motwani, the Indian journalist, and of Eva Gascon, the American journalist?
5. What is the irony in the motto of the multinational company?
6. UCIL was co-owned by an American company, the Indian government and local investors. Analyze and describe the working conditions in the Indian plant. Do you think that that chemical factory would have been able to function on American soil under the same conditions? Justify your answer.
7. What was the attitude of the American owners of UCC before and after the tragedy? What were their responsibilities and how did they assume them? Analyze and explain.
8. Describe some of the aspects of the Indian culture portrayed in the film. Which ones caught your attention and why?
9. The Bhopal tragedy took place in 1984. However, current practices of outsourcing corporations have not improved that much. Do some research and provide examples of this present-day reality.
10. Find information about the current situation of Bhopal. Is the pesticide plant still running? What about the parent company?

Bibliography

- Portal web: www.bhopal.com
- Portal web IMDb – Movies, TV and Celebrities: <http://www.imdb.com>

Material to consult

- Documentary by National Geographic: “The Bhopal Disaster”
- Documentary by BBC: “One Night in Bhopal”