
Borra, Adriana and Ruth Mader-Koltay. ***German Through Film.***

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Finding teaching materials that are contemporary enough to be interesting to students and linguistically appropriate to their language level is challenging at best. Add to this the difficulty of reworking materials to make them pedagogically sound without compromising their authenticity, and it soon becomes clear why there are so few truly excellent classroom materials for foreign language teachers. *German Through Film* addresses both of these potential shortcomings by providing an up-to-date, flexible, and pedagogically sound series of film modules that can be used at various levels of instruction. The target audience is primarily high school and college students of German, though some of the selected films address controversial topics that may not be readily accepted or approved for secondary school use.

That aside, the films were chosen based on their availability both in Germany and the United States, as well as for their portrayal of a number of post-war social issues that affect the daily lives and the collective conscience of contemporary German speakers. The eight film modules cover a range of topics from the Nazi regime (*Comedian Harmonists, Aimeé und Jaguar, Nirgendwo in Afrika*) and the integration of minorities into the national fabric (*Jenseits der Stille, Im Juli*) to reunification (*Good Bye Lenin!*) and post-modern, Euro-global Germany (*Lola rennt; Was tun,*

wenn's brennt?). The underlying teaching methodology rests on content-based instruction, letting the content of the films drive the teaching of German.

Each module contains the following items: a film synopsis in German; pre-viewing/schemata-building activities relating the film to students' personal lives; vocabulary lists and exercises; a series of comprehension questions ranging from cloze, true-false questions through extended comprehension questions to more open-ended, inferential/opinion questions; and follow-up activities requiring interpretation of characters, scenes, film quotes, etc. as well as suggestions for group or individual projects. This rich variety allows the films and the accompanying exercises and tasks to be used by beginning through advanced students, though the complexity of the synopses, the films themselves, and the richer and more global activities will require at least intermediate proficiency. The pedagogical strength of this approach is that it thoroughly addresses students' cognitive needs for appropriate activities before, during, and after viewing. Furthermore, the build-up from "intensive" cloze to open-ended, "extensive" analytical/interpretive exercises provides the kind of scaffolding that leads students to higher proficiency and forces increasingly detailed attention to language and culture.

One particular strength of the materials lies in their attention to sociolinguistic concerns and authentic language use. This focus is seen in exercises asking students to attribute film quotes to certain characters, as well as exercises that ask them to analyze language registers by translating from German slang to standard German to standard English to English slang. Special vocabulary sections list items specific to the time frame referenced in the film, i.e., East German words or political terminology of the Nazi party. Students are also exposed to a rich and varied sample of new vocabulary words — particularly adjectives — in compiling descriptions of the film characters. One major concern related to vocabulary is that the awareness of semantic mapping does not carry over into the general vocabulary lists, which are still organized in alphabetical order. However, instructors can and should modify their materials for maximum benefit in the classroom; this is an easy fix.

German Through Film is particularly well suited to the needs of post-secondary, undergraduate German programs that constantly face the challenge of maintaining interest in all things German and increasing enrollments. With its comprehensive yet short overview of German cinema since 1945, extensive vocabulary list of film-specific terms, and suggestions for very critical, high-end analytical student projects, this compilation can easily serve as the main text for either a general elective course based on cross-cultural depictions or a more specialized course focused on film as a genre of German expression. Furthermore, its pedagogical approach is both sound and easily replicated, making it suitable to deal with more canonical films as vehicles of language study and easy to add newer films to a course syllabus as they are produced. As German film becomes more popular as a worldwide, mainstream medium, the approach taken here certainly will help grow student interest in German cinema.

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