

Star Wars is one of those films that everyone ought to see to become a functioning member of society. From the societal aspect alone, it is one of the most influential films of the last half century. It is also chock full of literary elements that are pertinent both on an academic and a social level. One great benefit to viewing a film like *Star Wars* in class is that students will automatically be at least somewhat interested. It is important to consider the interests of students when planning a course curriculum. When students see that the things they already enjoy can be enjoyed academically, it adds a whole new level of interest and understanding. If taught correctly, students will often jump at the chance to view their favorite movies in a new light.

Just as close reading of literature is key to understanding, so is close watching of a film. For the lesson plan, the students are broken up into groups, which allows them to closely focus on different aspects of the film each day. Doing this helps them to hone in on important elements that would otherwise go unnoticed. This is a valuable skill that transfers easily between all forms of writing and film.

To make this unit a success, teachers need to find ways to direct student thinking during the viewing of the film without detracting from the experience of watching it. Teachers also need to only speak when necessary during conversations. Many of the students in class are likely to be familiar with, if not experts on *Star Wars*. Therefore, let them do the talking. There is well more than enough material in the film to cover two weeks of class time, let alone five days. The most important times to interject during conversations are the times when the question is begged, “so what?” Many of the observations to be made about the movie are quite obvious. Yes, Darth Vader represents evil, now, “so what?” Because many students have experience with the film, it is imperative that instead of simply becoming more familiar with the basics that they go deeply into the film’s nuances and meaning. There are many aspects of the film that will have to be brushed over, but make sure to spend time on topics that bear significance toward the overall picture of the film.

The purpose of the packet is to provide the students with their own compendium of notes. Because it is neatly organized, it will be easy for students to reference it during conversations or later if they want to look for something. The purpose of the homework assignments is to get students thinking about how studying something academically changes their own conceptions of a work. Hopefully, by the end of the unit students will at least have a healthy appreciation for the films complexities.

<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 2</u>	<u>Day 3</u>	<u>Day 4</u>	<u>Day 5</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Assign groups • Play: Beginning – Chapter 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play: Chapter 10 – Chapter 27 • Discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play: Chapter 28 – Chapter 38 • Discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play: Chapter 39 – Ending • Discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Discussion • Response assignment

LESSON 1

“A LONG TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...”

An introduction to *Star Wars*

What’s on for Today and why

To get students excited about the next five days, all you need to do is mention *Star Wars*. Some students will already be experts on the movies, but there is always more to learn! The objective today is to get students excited, into groups, watching the movie, and briefly discussing what they see and hear.

What to do

1. Introducing the Film (3 mins)

You may want to first ask students whether or not they have seen the movie (most probably have). Ask them if they like or dislike the movie. Briefly explain that *Star Wars*, which came out in 1977, has tremendous cultural significance and has been drawn upon heavily as inspiration since its debut.

2. Getting Into Film Groups (5 mins)

Quickly assign each of the students numbers 1-4. The reason for this is not group work, but instead to get them focusing on different aspects of the film. Each day, the students will rotate which aspects they are looking out for. The aspect groups are:

- 1) Images/Colors/Camera Work
- 2) Sounds effects/Soundtrack/Voices
- 3) Symbolism/Setting
- 4) Actor Dialogue/Body Language/Facial Expressions

Hand out the packets and explain that they should be taking notes throughout the watching of the film. Briefly explain any questions they have.

3. Getting Them Thinking While Watching (32 mins)

Play the film from the beginning up until the end of chapter 9. Students should know what aspect group they are in for that day and should take notes. If there is something that you feel is important to pause the movie for, feel free, but speaking during silences will save much needed time. These questions are to be thought about, not discussed during the film. Some questions/comments you might want to interject are:

- Why is the film set up with “A long time ago...?”
- What do you notice about Darth Vader's introduction?
- Note the colors used during the scene in the rebel ship.

- Why does the plot follow the droids at the beginning?
- Think about the significance of the setting of Tatooine.
- Note the way in which Uncle Owen talks about Jedi.

4. Homework

Ask the students to write 1-2 paragraphs about their own experience with *Star Wars*. They should feel free to write whatever they like about the film. All responses should be posted on the class discussion board.

How did it go?

Evaluation of this activity is based on your answers to the following questions:

- Were the students excited for the upcoming days?
- Were the students engaged for the entire class period?
- Did the students take notes during the watching of the film?

LESSON 2

“THE FORCE?”

Understanding the *Star Wars* Universe

What’s on for Today and why

The day’s lesson, although continuing to keep students on-task with writing down their notes, focuses on students’ understanding of how the *Star Wars* universe is developed throughout the film.

What to do

1. How a Universe is Created (6 mins)

At the beginning of class, open the floor for discussion on how George Lucas manages to create an entire universe without ever having to explicitly explain anything. Ask students what types of things we see in the *Star Wars* universe that we do not have in our own and how those things are introduced and explained, if they are explained at all. Tell them to take special note of the upcoming Cantina scene, which is the first scene in the movie which shows many clearly alien life forms.

2. Getting Them Thinking While Watching (34 mins)

Play the film from chapter 10 up until the end of chapter 27 (Note: You may want to skip chapter 24, which will save three minutes). Students should rotate aspect groups and take notes. If there is something that you feel is important to pause the movie for, feel free, but speaking during silences will save much needed time. These questions are to be thought about, not discussed during the film. Some questions/comments you might want to interject are:

- What is the significance of the lightsaber? Why not a blaster?
- Is Obi-Wan’s explanation of Luke’s father a fair one?
- Carefully note Luke’s reaction upon seeing his dead aunt and uncle. Is this foreshadowing?
- In the original cut of the movie, Han shot Greedo first. What’s the difference?

3. Homework

All students should log into the class discussion board and respond to at least two other posts.

How did it go?

Evaluation of this activity is based on your answers to the following questions:

- Were the students seeming to understand your interjections?
- Were students remaining on-task in taking notes?
- Did students participate in the opening conversation?

LESSON 3

“LUKE, WE’RE GONNA HAVE COMPANY!”

Relationships in *Star Wars*

What’s on for Today and why

The day’s lesson should get students thinking about characterization and how the characters interact, as well as their designated aspect groups. They will hopefully see new levels of depth and complexity in the characters and their relationships.

What to do

1. How are the characters portrayed? (10 mins)

As class begins, ask students to take open their packets to handout
2. Ask students to share notes that they’ve written about the characters thus far. Discuss character traits of the main characters, most importantly Luke and Han. Ask students to consider how the two interact with one another. Also ask students about how the droids and Chewbacca are treated by the rest of the characters (are they appreciated, taken for granted, etc.). Have students take notes on what is said in their packets and to continue focusing on relationships during the film.

2. Getting Them Thinking While Watching (30 mins)

Play the film from chapter 28 up until the end of chapter 38. Students should rotate aspect groups and take notes. If there is something that you feel is important to pause the movie for, feel free, but speaking during silences will save much needed time. These questions are to be thought about, not discussed during the film. Some questions/comments you might want to interject are:

- What do you notice about Han’s skepticism?
- How does Leia treat her rescuers?
- Is Vader’s ability to “sense” proven to be useful?
- What is the significance of the Stormtroopers’ lack of perceptiveness?
- Why does Ben say “if you strike me down, I will become more powerful than you could possibly imagine?”

How did it go?

Evaluation of this activity is based on your answers to the following questions:

- Were the students involved in the class discussion?
- Were students grasping the complexities of the relationships?
- Did students stay on task and attentive throughout the film?

LESSON 4

“MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU...”

The Force as a Source of Hope

What’s on for Today and why

The day’s lesson should help get students thinking about what the Force is and how it relates to the idea of hope. Understanding the Force is crucial to gaining meaning from the movie. Many relations can be made between the Force and religion and faith.

What to do

1. Discussing the Force (10 mins)

When class begins, ask students to share any thoughts they have on the Force. To guide discussion, ask about how different characters in the *Star Wars* universe view the Force. Is the Force real, or might it really be “luck,” as Han originally says. How does belief in the Force foster a mentality of hope? Students should think about these ideas while watching the film and taking notes.

2. Getting them thinking while watching (26 mins)

Play the film from chapter 39 through the ending. Students should rotate aspect groups and take notes. If there is something that you feel is important to pause the movie for, feel free, but speaking during silences will save much needed time. These questions are to be thought about, not discussed during the film. Some questions/comments you might want to interject are:

- Han claims he’s in it for the money. Do his actions reflect his rationale?
- Leia repeats the line “it’s our only hope” twice in the movie. What is the significance of this?
- Is Luke developing a relationship with R2D2 that hasn’t been seen before?
- Note the allusion to the Titanic at 1:51:00 said by Commander Tarkin. What does this foreshadow?
- What does the fact that Han returns in the end say about his character?

3. Recapping the film (4 mins)

Ask the students if they enjoyed the film. Briefly ask them to explain why. If they’ve seen it before, did their conceptions of the film change? Why or why not? The homework assignment should then be prescribed.

4. Homework

At home, students should log in to the class page on VoiceThread.com. A picture of the *Star Wars* theatrical release poster (found here: http://www.tomsgames.com/us/fringedrinking/star_wars_poster.jpg) should be shown. Students should speak or write about their feelings on the film overall. Did they enjoy it? What things did they particularly notice about the film that made them think? If they had already seen the film before, what, if any feelings about the film have changed and why?

At first, make all student responses invisible to other students (using the curtain icon). Once several students have responded, make all comments visible so that students can respond to one another.

How did it go?

Evaluation of this activity is based on your answers to the following questions:

- Were students engaged in both discussions?
- Did students seem to pick up on a number of things that made them think about the film?
- Were students attentive and taking notes throughout the film?

LESSON 5

“...AND ALSO WITH YOU.”

Socratic Seminar

Note: It would be preferable if two full days were allotted for this lesson. The times provided are condensed for one day.

What’s on for Today and why

The activity for the day should get students openly discussing their thoughts and feelings about the movie. The discussions should be almost entirely student led. What happens in class will be a precursor to the writing assignment that they are to be given.

What to do

1. Discussing their notes (35 mins)

When students arrive, the desks should be set up in a circle. The discussion should begin by asking how the homework went and if in reflection any thoughts changed about the movie. The students should then get out their notes on the film. Go through the different topics by aspect group. Some of these may overlap, which is in fact good, but try to keep students talking about the aspect at hand. Make sure to get through all four groups.

The first aspect you may want to discuss is 1) Images/Colors/Camera Work. Some guiding questions you might want to ask are:

- What are some colors that we repeatedly see throughout the film? What is their significance?
- Name some memorable shots from the film. What about those shots made them such strong images?
- How were a lot of the space scenes shot? What was the perspective in space, and what feelings do these perspectives instill?

The second aspect you may want to discuss is 2) Sounds effects/Soundtrack/Voices. Some guiding questions you might want to ask are:

- How do the electronic sounds from droids, namely R2D2, convey emotion?
- What are some places where the soundtrack plays a crucial role? Why is it important?
- What type of feeling do the sound effects convey? Do they feel artificial?

The third aspect you may want to discuss is 3) Symbolism/Setting. Some guiding questions you might want to ask are:

- What is the significance of the opening on Tatooine?
- What does the lightsaber represent?
- What symbols stood out to you as being pertinent to the meaning of the film?

The fourth aspect you may want to discuss is 4) Actor Dialogue/Body Language/Facial Expressions. Some guiding questions you might want to ask are:

- What were some memorable quotes. Why are they memorable?
- How does the body language of the different characters reflect their personalities?
- In the scene where Luke sees his dead aunt and uncle, what does his face show? (You may want to have the DVD player cued to 00:45:55 to show a brief clip)

As time winds down, segue the conversation into the upcoming paper assignment.

2. Assign/Discuss Homework (5 mins)

The students should be assigned to write a 2 page essay on any topic discussed during class. The assignment should be free-form, having any thesis they wish to argue. Because some students will feel uncomfortable being given such an open-ended assignment, you should create a student-generated list of potential topics on the board. Some topics you should be sure to include are:

- Symbolism of the lightsaber
- The relationship between Han and Luke
- The main characters' treatment of secondary and tertiary characters (e.g. the droids, Chewbacca)
- Who is the hero of the movie?

Students should be given ample time to complete the assignment, up to a week. In following classes, any questions or concerns should be addressed. However, by the next class, students should have at least a thesis and a rudimentary outline of their essays.

How did it go?

Evaluation of this activity is based on your answers to the following questions:

- Were all students engaged in the discussion?
- Did students discuss relevant and higher-order concepts?
- Did students understand the assignment given?

Name _____

Date _____

Star Wars, Nothin' But Star Wars

A look into the *Star Wars* Universe

Over the next five classes, we will be delving into George Lucas's 1977 film, *Star Wars: A New Hope*. The release of the film set off a revolution, the effects of which are easily seen today. We will be watching the film for four days and having a class discussion on the fifth. You will be assigned a number that will dictate what aspect of the film you should take notes on each day. The four aspect groups are as follows:

- 1) Images/Colors/Camera Work
- 2) Sounds effects/Soundtrack/Voices
- 3) Symbolism/Setting
- 4) Actor Dialogue/Body Language/Facial Expressions

Each day, you should all rotate groups. Rotate in numerical order. For instance, if today I am in group 3, tomorrow I will be in group 4. The next day I will be in group 1, and the last day I will be in group 3. By the end of the movie, you should have taken notes on each of the four aspect groups. **Save this packet as you will be using it every day.**

For a good laugh (and to understand the title of this unit), I suggest you do a Google search for Bill Murray's Saturday Night Live *Star Wars* sketch

"May the Force be with you..."



Aspect Group 1) Images/Colors/Camera Work

Topic	What?	When?	Significance?
Images			
Colors			
Camera Work			

Aspect Group 2) Sounds effects/Soundtrack/Voices

Topic	What?	When?	Significance?
Sound Effects			
Soundtrack			
Voices			

Aspect Group 3) Symbolism/Setting

Topic	What?	When?	Significance?
Images			
Colors			

Aspect Group 4) Actor Dialogue/Body Language/Facial Expressions

Topic	What?	When?	Significance?
Actor Dialogue			
Body Language			
Facial Expressions			

Notes on Characters

Luke Skywalker:

Han Solo:

Princess Leia:

R2D2/C3P0:

Darth Vader:

Obi-Wan Kenobi:

Chewbacca:

Commander Tarkin:

Extras (Stormtroopers, Sand People, etc.):

Room For Additional Notes

“...and also with you.”

