Oide Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí Scoile agus Múinteoirí | Supporting the Professional Learning of School Leaders and Teachers

Senior Cycle English

Exploring Senior Cycle Texts
Children of Men
Directed by Alfonso Cuarón

Image courtesy of IMDb

Children of Men, directed by Alfonso Cuarón, is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2028. It may be used as part of the Comparative Study at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- Please note that *Children of Men* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

Scan the QR code or click here to access a Getting Started with Guide for this Text

Before You Watch... (Teacher Guidance)

These activities support students in activating prior knowledge, exploring cultural context, and making predictions prior to viewing Children of Men.
Adapt as appropriate for your class context.

1. Exploring Context and Expectations

You may wish to use a Think–Pair–Share structure to prompt discussion on students' existing knowledge of dystopian fiction and imagined future societies.
Encourage students to consider what might happen if a major global crisis affected the survival of humanity, such as environmental collapse, war, or a sudden inability to have children.
Discussion may also explore:

- how governments might respond to social breakdown or mass migration
- the ways fear and uncertainty can influence people's behaviour
- the importance of hope, responsibility, and moral choice during times of crisis

You might invite students to reflect on real-world issues such as the plight of refugees, inequality, or political instability, while emphasising sensitivity and respect in discussion.

2. Making Predictions

Invite students to predict the type of story suggested by the film's title and dystopian premise.
Students may compose a short paragraph outlining their expectations in relation to tone, themes, character journeys, or key conflicts before viewing.
They could be prompted to consider questions such as:

- Will the film present the future as entirely bleak, or will there be signs of hope?
- What kinds of challenges might the central characters face?
- How might the idea of "children" function symbolically in the narrative?

Activities Based on Film Still and Clip (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format, as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Lighting and Colour Analysis

Have students examine the use of lighting and colour in the provided stills. Ask them to discuss with a partner how the muted tones, shadows, and bleak urban settings contribute to the mood and tone of the film. Encourage consideration of how visual darkness, crowding, or visual disorder may suggest tension, fear, or social breakdown. Students might make brief notes on their observations.

2. Cinematography and Mise-en-scène

Guide students to analyse each still by focusing on cinematography (camera angle, framing, lighting) and mise-en-scène (characters, expressions, costumes, props, setting). Ask them to consider how these elements communicate themes such as control, vulnerability, conflict, or survival. Students should identify the image they believe conveys these ideas most effectively and justify their choice.

3. Film Clip Study

Direct students to watch the film clip linked here. Ask them to examine how the filmmaker uses cinematography, sound, character actions, dialogue, and mise-en-scène to create tension and emotional impact. Instruct students to select one or two specific moments from the clip and explain why these moments are particularly powerful or engaging for the audience.

Images courtesy of IMDB

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following activities may form part of your extended study of the film. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Personal Essay

Instruct students to write a personal response to *Children of Men*. Ask them to describe their thoughts and feelings about the world of the film, the central characters, and its exploration of hope, fear, or survival. Students should explain how the film prompted them to reflect on issues such as responsibility, human resilience, or the value of new life. Direct them to support their ideas with specific examples from the film.

2. Speech

Guide students to write a speech for their classmates on the topic:

"In times of crisis, individuals can lose hope or find new reasons to believe in the future."

Students should craft a clear and engaging speech exploring this idea, drawing on moments, characters, or themes from the film where appropriate.

3. Creative Writing – Letter from the Future

Ask students to imagine they are Theo, Kee, or another character in the film. Instruct them to write a letter that will be sent in a time capsule back twenty years to the people of Earth. In the letter students might like to describe the world they live in, share their inner thoughts, emotions, and reflections and ask their audience to consider how they could make changes that could influence the future of humankind.

4. Perspective Shift

Organise students into groups and direct them to rewrite a key scene from the point of view of a minor character, such as a refugee, a soldier, or an onlooker in the city. Ask them to explore what this character might notice, fear, or hope for that the main characters do not. Students may storyboard their ideas or write a short script and perform the reimagined scene.

5. News Project – Reporting from the Island

Instruct students to imagine they are journalists reporting on a major event from the film, such as the discovery of a pregnant woman or unrest in the streets. Have them create a front-page article, TV or radio report that includes:

- a compelling headline or story
- a lead section or paragraph summarising the event
- a detailed outline or body text explaining the situation
- quotes or imagined interviews
- clear background context for readers
- formal yet engaging register in appropriate newspaper or reporting language

Ask students to present their front page/deliver their report to the class and explain the editorial choices they made.

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