



Exploring Junior Cycle Prescribed Film *Napoleon Dynamite* directed by Jered Hess

Napoleon Dynamite directed by Jered Hess is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohort 2025-28, 2026-29, and 2027-30.)

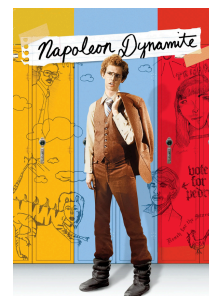


Image courtesy of
Little Island

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.
- *Napoleon Dynamite* 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 Read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Using the stills on page 2 of this resource:

- Invite students to look closely at the colours, body language, and facial expressions in each image.
- Ask them to discuss in pairs:
 - What type of personalities do these characters seem to have?
 - What clues do the settings give about where they live and what their lives are like?
- Allow students time to feedback to their peers in the room.

2. Setting and Mood: Life in a Small Town

- Show students one or two film stills that highlight the rural setting.
- In small groups, students generate a mind map of words or images that come to mind when they think of small-town life.
- Prompt discussion on:
 - What opportunities might exist in such a place?
 - What challenges might characters face?
- Students share one idea per group.



Images and Trailer



**[Click here to watch
the trailer for
Napoleon Dynamite
courtesy of iMDB](#)**



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

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

1. Close Reading of Visual Text: Trailer Response

After watching the trailer:

- Ask students to choose one of the stills from earlier and decide which image best represents the tone or “world” of the film.
- Students write a short paragraph explaining their choice, considering:
 - Colour
 - Costume
 - Facial expression
 - Movement or energy
 - Setting



2. Exploring Character

Guide students to watch a short scene featuring Napoleon, Deb, or Pedro.

Prompt students to identify two details that reveal something about the character (e.g. gestures, reactions, clothing, dialogue). Allow student time to write a descriptive paragraph introducing the character, inspired by the techniques used in the scene.

3. Interpreting Relationships

Give time to students to discuss what the scene suggests about relationships between characters (e.g. friendship, awkwardness, loyalty, rivalry). To guide students from exploratory oracy to written expression, invite students to write a paragraph predicting how these relationships may develop as the film continues.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the text. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Personal Response

Yield space to students to consider to the prompt: *'What challenges do young people face when trying to fit in?'* Guide students in writing a personal response, drawing on moments from the film to support their ideas.

2. Visual Storytelling

Guide students to write a paragraph explaining how visual elements in one scene or shot communicate mood or theme e.g. colour, framing, props, costume, body language

3. Voice and Perspective

Give students the opportunity to write a diary entry from the perspective of Napoleon, Deb, or Pedro after a key moment in the film.

- Encourage them to focus on:
 - Emotion
 - Internal thoughts
 - Hopes or worries
 - A detail from the film that shaped their reaction

4. Opinion Piece / Extended Writing

Yield space to students to consider and respond to one of the following prompts in extended prose:

- "How does the film show that everyone feels different sometimes?"
- "What does Napoleon Dynamite teach us about confidence and being yourself?"
- Guide students to support their points with specific examples from scenes or visuals.