



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

Hotel Rwanda directed by Terry George

Hotel Rwanda directed by Terry George is a biopic film included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2026, 2027 and 2028, 2029 and 2030).



Image courtesy of
Apple TV+

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.
- *Hotel Rwanda* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and 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)

1. Establish Prior Knowledge

On the board, display prompts such as: Genocide, Persecution, Minority Groups, International Response etc. Ask students to work in pairs to create a mind map of what they already know about genocide - what the term means, examples they're aware of, and any words, images or associations that come to mind.

2. Discussion - Hope and Humanity

Provide students with some questions to prompt discussion:


Why might people still try to maintain routines, even during times of extreme conflict? How can small acts of kindness and hospitality help people cope in dangerous times? What emotions do you imagine characters might be feeling inside a hotel that has become a refuge?

3. Technique Prediction

Before watching, ask students to think like film critics. In their copies, have them complete predictions: In this scene, I think the director will use...music to show (e.g. fear, hope, cultural identity), lighting to create (e.g. contrast between safety and danger, emotional tension etc.), camera shots to highlight (e.g. crowded spaces, personal struggle, chaos vs order etc.), characters to express (e.g. moral courage, desperation, leadership, conflict etc.)



Watch a clip

Click [here](#)  to watch a clip from the film, *Hotel Rwanda*, courtesy of Youtube.

Background: This opening scene from *Hotel Rwanda* takes place in Kigali, Rwanda in 1994, with the country enduring sporadic violence that eventually erupted into a vicious civil war. Despite the upbeat music, bustling streets and light-hearted conversation between characters, there are images of unrest and threat of violence visible everywhere.

Activities Based on Clip(Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Film-Language Focus

Ask students to work in pairs and examine how the scene is constructed in two phases—before the sudden moment outside the hotel and after.

They should look for:

- Sound: What background noises, dialogue, or sudden silences stand out in each phase? How does the shift in sound signal danger or tension?
- Character reactions: How do body language, expressions, or gestures change once the characters leave the interior space?

2. Soundtrack and Atmosphere Reflection

Ask pupils if they were directing this scene, what sound effects or musical track would they use to heighten the moment after the weapons are revealed. Have pupils draft a short description of the audio landscape.

3. Rewrite

Have pupils rewrite the ending of the scene from the point of view of someone who is visiting the hotel from another country, who overhears the conversation between Paul and Georges and who witnesses the crate breaking open.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Analytical Response

Ask students to choose a moment in the clip where they felt the mood shifts most dramatically. They should explain what happens in that moment, how they felt as a viewer, and why they think the filmmaker made that choice.

2. Director's Notebook

Have pupils imagine you are the director of *Hotel Rwanda*. They should write a short reflection explaining why they wanted to show this scene, what message or mood they hoped to create and how they used film techniques to achieve it. This could be written as a production note or short essay.



3. Mood Board

In groups, have students create a visual mood board (digital or paper) that captures the two halves of the scene.

- Inside the hotel (colours, textures and demeanor of characters)
- Outside the hotel: (contrast of colours, harsh sounds, and images that represent threat or violence)

Encourage groups to present their boards and explain how each visual choice reflects what they saw and felt, or have them conduct a gallery walk and provide feedback on post-its to each project.

4. Discursive Response

Give students the prompt below and guide them to write a structured discursive response using evidence from the clip: *'Even in the most dangerous moments, people still hold on to routines that bring comfort.'*

5. Personal Response

Provide students with the prompt below and have them write a personal response to it: *'The battle between prejudice and morality exists in all societies'*

6. Filmmaking Project

Have students work in groups to create a short film (up to 3 minutes) that shows a sudden change in atmosphere. Assign roles within each group (e.g., director, actors, camera operator, scriptwriter). Provide class time for planning, or set this stage for homework.. **This link** could help pupils to create a script.

