

Watch and Respond

Strangers on a Train

Directed by
Alfred Hitchcock

Please note: The questions and activities below are a small sample that could be incorporated into lessons. Teachers will need to consider the unique context and both age and stage of their students when planning how to best use/adapt this resource.

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons or as part of a unit of learning.
- Students may wish to complete some tasks individually or in pairs and/or groups.
- Tasks might be completed orally and/or in written format.
- Students may also wish to engage in a think, pair, share activity for some tasks.

Background to the Film:

Strangers on a Train is psychological thriller and film noir set in 1950's American and directed by Alfred Hitchcock. In this adaptation of the popular thriller, tennis star Guy Haines is furious by his wife's refusal to finalise their divorce procedures so he can marry the senator's daughter. He starts up a conversation with a stranger, Bruno Anthony and unknowingly sets in motion a deadly chain of events.

Level 3 Learning Outcomes in Focus:

Oral Language 8	Listen actively in order to interpret meaning, compare, evaluate effectiveness of, and respond to drama, poetry, media broadcasts, digital media, noting key ideas, style, tone, content and overall impact in a systematic way O★
Reading 9	Read their texts for understanding and appreciation of character, setting, story and action: to explore how and why characters develop, and to recognise the importance of setting and plot structure ★
Writing 3	Respond imaginatively in writing to their texts showing a critical appreciation of language, style and content, choice of words, language patterns, tone, images ★

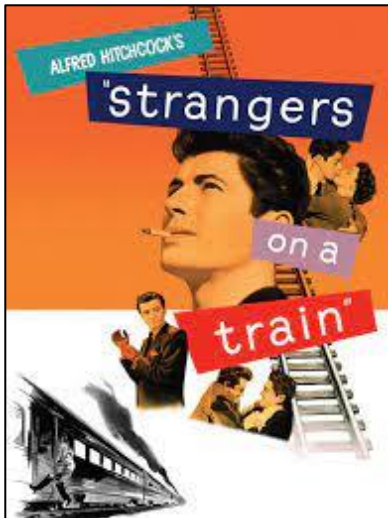
Links to L2LPs:

Communication and Literacy	1.6 Listen to and respond to a range of stories 1.7 Identify a range of non-verbal communications methods, e.g. facial expression, tones of voice, symbols, clothing, colours to signal mood/appropriate action
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Section 1: Introductory activity

Before you watch, look at the following two posters for this film:



Images courtesy of IMDb

1. Based on the above posters, which would persuade you to watch the film, *Strangers on a Train*? Give reasons for your choice. You may wish to use some of the following prompts in your answer:
 - Images
 - Colour
 - Text for example
2. Look at each poster. Do you think the font used is effective? Give reasons for your thoughts.
3. In your opinion, what message does each poster convey to the audience? Give reasons for your thoughts.

Section 2: The opening sequence

Watch the film's opening sequence courtesy of Filmcliplive:

<https://youtu.be/rQ2AeC6ZIXY>

- From your initial viewing of the opening sequence what details are revealed about the world of this film?



Now, watch the opening sequence for a second time and answer the questions below:

- 0.09-0.20: The opening sequence focuses on a pair of black and white shoes. What do you think these shoes reveal to the audience about the character that wears them?
- 0.40-0.57: Directors often use music to aid the story or to add to the narrative of the film. The music intensifies as both characters begin walking. What effect does this have on the viewer? What does the change in music tempo reveal to the viewer?
- 1.22: When both characters eventually take their seats, their shoes tip off each other and the music changes. How does this create a sense of expectation for the viewer?

Finally, watch the opening sequence in full once more.

- If this opening was in colour, would it tell a different story or have a different appeal. Give reasons for your answer.

Section 3: Possible Extended Tasks:

A. Engaging with film stills:

1. Look at the following film stills and corresponding colour palettes. Discuss the following aspects in relation to each film still:
 - colour
 - character
 - lighting
 - positioning
 - costume
 - facial expressions
 - props
 - other



Hunt for the Wilderpeople



Wolfwalkers



The Present



Strangers on a Train

2. Choose **one** character from the film still of your choice. Write a short descriptive piece **from the point of view of your chosen character**. You might like to zone in on **one detail** relating to this character.

B. Storyboarding

On the next page is an adapted storyboard for the 'Carousel Scene' in *Strangers on a Train*.

- As you look at the storyboard, describe what is happening in this scene.
- Using your own storyboard, recreate the opening sequence or another sequence of your choice from *Strangers on a Train*. Your storyboard should contain text under each panel to describe what is happening in each scene.

[Click here to download a possible storyboard template.](#)

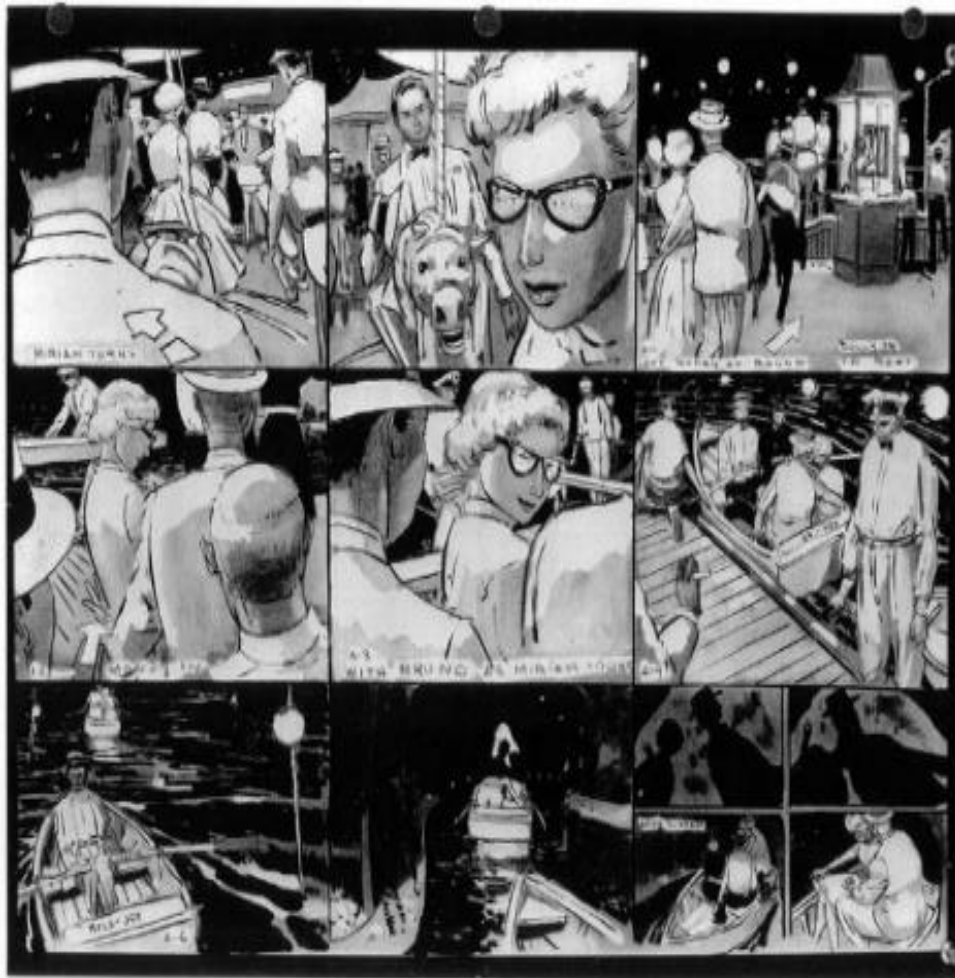


Image courtesy of Cinephilia & Beyond/Gabriel Hardman

C. Creating a travel blog

Imagine you are a travel blogger. You have been tasked with researching one of the following locations mentioned in the film, *Strangers on a Train*.

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|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. New York, USA | 3. Long Island, USA |
| 2. Metcalf, Texas | 4. Acapulco, Mexico |

Using the following prompts, write the blog for an teenage audience encouraging them to visit your chosen location. Choose some of the possible content ideas:

Note for Teachers:

You might like to co-construct some key points with students to include in their pieces.