



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

The Third Man

directed by Carol Reed

The Third Man, directed by Carol Reed, is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2027 and 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.
- *The Third Man* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

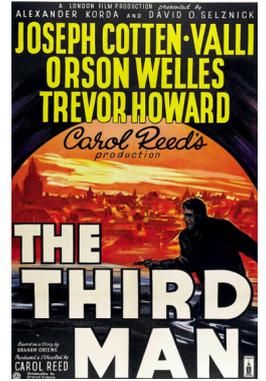


Image courtesy of IMDB



Scan the QR code
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Before You Watch... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Explore Context

Ask students to research what Vienna was like immediately after WWII. Instruct them to summarise their findings under the headings:

- Who controlled Vienna?
- What were “the four zones of occupation”?
- What problems did ordinary people face?

Tell students to share their summaries with a classmate.

2. Key Vocabulary

Ask students to read the glossary provided. Tell them to research the meaning of any unfamiliar words. Instruct them to use the vocabulary to write three predictions about the plot of the film.

Black market, occupation, shadow, sewer, betrayal, morality.

3. Ethical Dilemma Discussion

Present the dilemma: If someone you trusted did something illegal but could make money from it, would you expose them or protect them? Ask students to debate the issue as a class.



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

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

1. Ask students to examine the use of **lighting and colour** in the stills provided. Instruct them to consider how the visual style contributes to mood and tone in each scene. Tell students to discuss their ideas with a partner and make notes.
2. Ask students to analyse the use of **cinematography** and mise-en-scène in the stills. Instruct them to consider whether these choices effectively convey moral ambiguity or paranoia. Remind them to focus on character, facial expression, positioning, costume, and props. Lead a class discussion to share findings.
3. Direct pupils to the film clip [linked here](#). In this scene, the mysterious presence of Harry Lime is finally revealed to the protagonist who thought he was dead. Instruct them to write an analysis of how lighting, sound, and character actions in the scene build suspense for the audience.



Image courtesy of *Studio Canal*



Image courtesy of *Studio Canal*



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Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

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

1. Personal Essay

It's the way people are in the dark that tells you who they really are.

Ask students to use *The Third Man* as inspiration to write a personal essay or short story that explores how people reveal, or conceal, their true selves in morally complex situations. Instruct them to focus on themes of trust, deception, and the tension between appearance and reality.

2. Speech

Tell students that they are taking part in an international debating competition on the motion: *Society today lacks ethics (morality), decency and respect for the law.* Ask them to write a speech either for or against this motion.

3. Creative Writing

Ask students to write the opening to a short story set in a mysterious location, using post-war Vienna as inspiration. Instruct them to focus on a confused character encountering the setting for the first time.

4. Scene Re-imagining

In groups, ask students to choose a scene from the film and discuss how it might look if reimagined in a different genre. Instruct them to redesign the scene to reflect this new genre, including details such as lighting, colours, costumes, dialogue, and atmosphere. Tell them to choose whether to storyboard their version or write and perform a short script.

5. Newspaper Project

Ask students, working in groups, to create a newspaper front page set in post-war Vienna that reports on events from the film. Assign or allow them to take on different roles such as: headline writer (to catch attention with noir-style titles), illustrator (to create sketches or find symbolic images), reporters (to write articles about Harry Lime, Holly Martins, or the black market scandal) and an editor (to oversee the project and make sure it all comes together). Once completed, tell each group to present their front page to the class and explain their editorial choices.