

Title : Hollywood Images and Literary Interpretation: Watching Against Popular Culture

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Abstract: Literature is mainly taught in classrooms but development in technology continues to blur the differences between the classroom and the home. Teaching Literature to students who spend appreciable amounts of time behind TV sets and computer screens make it imperative that teachers bring what is popular with students into the classroom--literature lessons. Whilst reading plays and will continue to play a huge role in society, the world is gradually inching beyond the literate world. Suzanne De Castelle notes the important role reading has played in society: "Until just a few decades ago, the book was literate culture's central vehicle for self-preservation and self-renewal" (30). She proceeds with the changes that have been occurring in the literate world: "Nowadays the book is increasingly regarded as an obsolete technology, a technology that many feel has outlived its usefulness" (30).

Aliteracy is defined as "the quality or state of being able to read but uninterested in doing so" (Webster's dictionary, 1994). Castelle describes a society amidst conflicting cultures thus: "We live today not in a literate, but in a post-literate culture--a culture which has been fundamentally and irreversibly defined and shaped by literacy, but in which new technologies and practices of representation have largely superceded writing and the written word" (30-31). Therefore students ought to be helped to transfer reading skills into viewing skills. Movies and computer games also deal with the same issues that texts deal with--cultural, social, racial, gender, communication--among others. Effective Literature teaching must simultaneously handle reading and viewing.

Stanley Fish admits: "The ability to interpret is not acquired; it is constitutive of being human" (195). Students do not have to satisfy entertainment for academic or intellectual pursuits when (reading or) watching movies. However, they would benefit more from watching images if they were able to make meaning not only from what is projected, but also from what the cameras *failed to* capture. That way, literature students would be creating a place for people of all cultures, races, genders and social dispositions in their interpretive realm. That poses a challenge to both teachers and students of Literature.