

TEACHING TRAILERS

TOUCHING THE VOID



For the following resource view the trailer for Touching the Void at www.filmeducation.org/secondary/TTV

Marketing a film

When a new film is made, it has to be advertised like any other new product, to let people know it exists and to encourage them to go to the cinema to see it.

The advertising of a film is known as film promotion or film marketing and the people who are responsible for this are the distribution company, so-called because they distribute (give out) the films to the cinemas and distribute the promotional material around the country.

The way in which a film is promoted can have a huge effect on whether or not it is successful. Films are expensive to make and if the public do not buy tickets at the box office to see the film, a lot of money will be lost.

· What films have you seen recently? What made you want to go and see them?

Make a list of all the factors that influenced you and put them in order of priority.

· Make a list of all the different ways in which you might hear about a film. Put these in order as to which give you the most information. Now re-order them to show which are the ones that make you really want to see a film. What does this say about the way you personally make choices about your film viewing? How does this compare with your friends?

· What cinemas are there in your local area? Are there any differences between them? How do you find out details of what films are showing and when? Visit the websites for several cinemas. How do the websites reflect the different nature of the organisations?

Planning a promotional campaign for a film

When the distributors agree to market a new film, they will watch it several months before it is released into the cinema and plan a marketing campaign. This includes deciding what should go into the posters, trailers, websites and other material that will market the film. There are some important points to consider:

Who will be the most likely to want to see this film?

Anyone may decide they want to see the film but there are some cinema-goers who are more likely to want to see it than others. These people are called the target audience and the marketing will aim to make the film look attractive to these people. Many films are aimed at ages between 15 – 24, because statistics tell us that this is the group that visits the cinema most often.

Having watched the trailer for film **Touching the Void** could you say who might want to go and see this film?

Films can often be put into types such as comedy, horror, science fiction, and family films etc. These are known as genres (the French word for type). The marketing will show the audience that have seen this type of film before and if they enjoyed it they will, most likely, come to see this one.

What is different about this film?

Although a film may be similar to one we have already seen, each film has something different about it, something unique. This may be the star or the director, or it could be something about the story or where it is set. It may even involve the style of the film. This is known as the Unique Selling Point of the film (USP for short). For instance, there are many films about dinosaurs but the unique selling point of one might be that it is a Disney animation, another because it has computer-generated images mixed with real life. A horror story might be unique because of the type of creature that comes to life or because Bruce Willis, who does not normally act in this type of film, is the star.

Looking at the trailer for Touching the Void what do you think is the unique selling point that is being used for the film?

Identifying Genre

Initial Impressions

The title of a film is what first catches our attention and arouses our interest in a film. As such, the choice of a title is a crucial part of the marketing campaign and can make a big difference as to whether or not the film is successful at the box office. The title of a film, along with other aspects of the marketing campaign may be altered to fit the particular cultural requirements of the territory in which the film is released.

What does a title need to do/be if it is to attract an audience for the film? What should it NOT do/be?

Think of ten titles that you consider helped to sell the film to an audience. Why were they so effective?

The film Touching the Void is based on a book, and so the film has retained the title of the book. What does this title suggest to you?

Genre as classification

Genre is a means of classifying that enables us to group together films according to narrative and film style. However, within each genre we can classify further into sub-genres. For example, a film may fall mainly into the classification of science fiction but may feature a relationship that means a love story is a strong factor in the narrative.

From your first viewing of the Touching the Void' trailer, what type of film would you say it is?

Narratives

When we watch a trailer we know from experience that we are seeing the most exciting, funny, significant or dramatic parts of a film and that we must interact with these to create a whole story from the parts we are given. A trailer is designed to create a 'want-to-see' reaction in an audience. To this end the trailer will give the audience some amount of information about a film in terms of narrative and character, but equally, will aim to raise questions that can only be answered by seeing the whole film.

Having watched the trailer for Touching the Void list five events that we see and alongside these, the questions that each event raises.

The trailer

The trailer for a film must encourage us to want to see the film. A poster has a hard task – it must catch our attention and give us information about a film in one still image. It is much easier for a trailer to give us a real taste of what the film is like because it uses moving image, such as the film itself. Moving images, whatever they are, have a far better chance of catching our attention than something that is still. The trailer holds our attention because the images change really quickly and we must concentrate all the time or we may miss something. Added to this, a trailer uses sound to get its message across. Music, sound effects, speech from the film and the voice-over all join together to create an exciting mixture for our ears. The combination of sound and moving images is a very effective way of attracting us to see a film.

We usually see a trailer just before we are about to see a film, although sometimes a short version of them appears in the advert breaks on television. Whether in the cinema, or on television, the distributors think carefully about who will be watching at a certain time of day/night and try to show a trailer which will be interesting to this type of audience.

TEACHING TRAILERS TASKS

View the trailer for Touching the Void again. Have a piece of paper and a pen to hand.

- At what point in the trailer are we told the name of the film? Why is this?
- Why are we told who is starring in the film? How is this information given to us?
- What type of action from the film do we see?

- What clues do the music give us as to what type of film the trailer is advertising?
- What can you say about the voice of the person delivering the voice-over? Why do you think this voice was chosen? What effect does it have?
- How does the speed of what we see compare to watching a clip from a film? Why is this? Does the speed alter through the trailer or stay the same?
- What information are we given in the very last frame of the trailer?
- Which is more effective in making you want to see the film, the poster or the trailer? Why is this?
- Where would you expect to see this trailer and give your reasons:
 - a) before what films at the cinema
 - b) before what television programmes
- How is the title used as a selling point, both in terms of the actual title itself and its position within the trailer?
- What elements of the trailer enable you to immediately recognise the genre of the film? Why is it important from the distributor's point of view that the trailer highlights the genre of the film?
- At the beginning of each trailer we are used to seeing the logo(s) for the company that is distributing the film. Can you remember the distributor's name for Touching the Void? And what are their logos?
- The director and/or producer of a film may also play an important role in attracting an audience to see a film. Comment on the way in which the director has been marketed in this trailer. Find out what other films the director has made. How does the director's previous films raise expectations for Touching the Void?
- Trailers - sometimes -incorporate recommendations from journalists in the form of quotes – in much the same way that posters do. What do the comments say, who has made them and what does this tell you about the target audience for the film?
- Trailers often incorporate a voice-over and this is important in setting the tone for the film. Listen to the voice-over for the trailer for Touching the Void. What information is given by the voice-over? How many voices do we hear?
- Write a set of guidelines for a trailer, assuming the person you are instructing has no knowledge of what a trailer actually is.