Sing Street Study Booklet





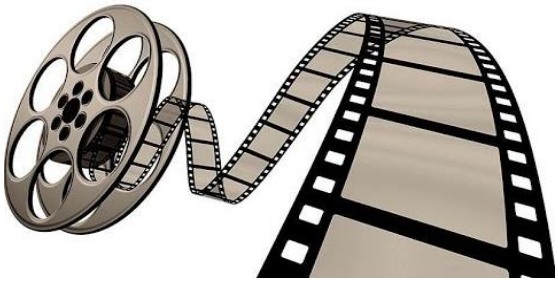
Junior Cycle English Studied Film

Name: _____

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Film Techniques/Vocabulary:

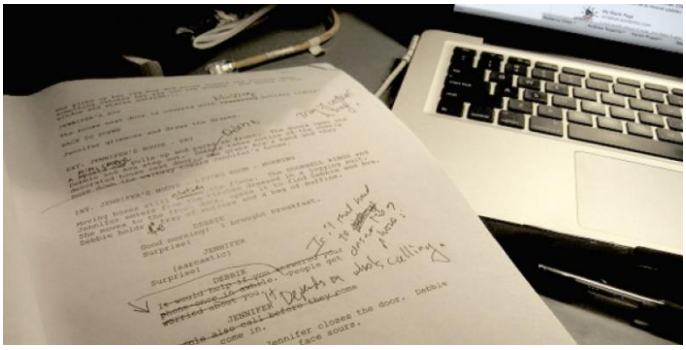


Mise-en-scene:

- The arrangement of everything that appears in the framing – actors, lighting, décor, props, costume – is called mise-en-scène, a French term that means "placing on stage."
- The frame and camerawork are also considered part of the mise-en-scène of a movie.
- If it's on the screen and if it's a physical object recorded by the camera, then it's part of the mise-en-scène.

Narrative:

- This refers to the story or the plotline of the film.



Genre:

- This refers to the type of film that is being studied, for example, horror/romance/comedy/science fiction.



Representation:

- How does this film show people? Are they accurately represented? Are there any stereotypes present and if so, why? Are they deliberate or unintentional?

Cinematography:

- This refers to the choice of camera angles and shots used in the film.



Editing:

- This refers to how the different shots and scenes of the film are put together. Editing can have a drastic effect on the storyline and what gets emphasised in the film. It can also affect pacing.



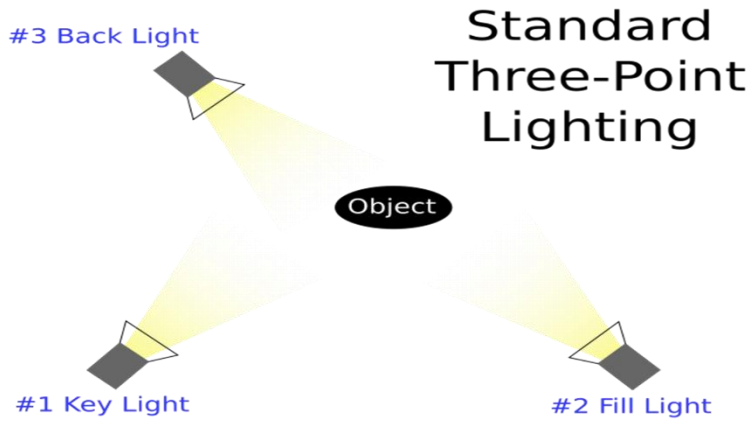
Special Effects:

- Special effects are illusions or visual tricks used in film to create imagined events in a story or virtual world.



Lighting:

The way that the scene is lit for the audience. Lighting can have an impact on the tone and mood of a scene.



Production Design:

Production design is the creation and organization of the physical world surrounding a film story. Anything that is included in the set should tell us something about the characters and the world that they live in.

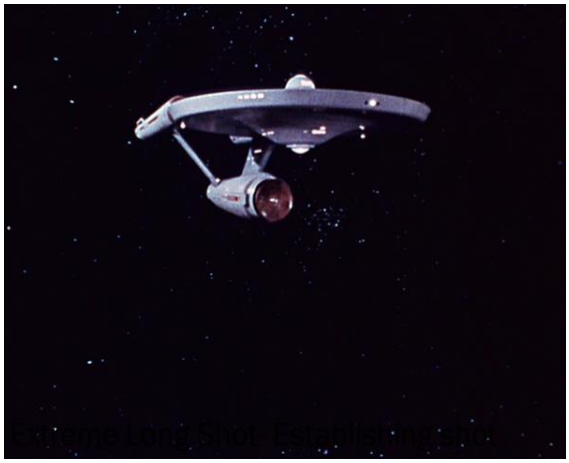


Camera Shots and Angles:

SHOTS

1. **Establishing Shot**

- It normally shows an exterior, often the outside of a building, or a landscape.
- There will be very little detail visible in the shot, it's meant to give a general impression rather than specific information.



2. **Long Shot**

- A shot which shows the image as approximately "life" size. This category includes the full shot showing the entire human body, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom.
- While the focus is on characters, plenty of background detail still emerges. We can tell Harry and Slughorn are in a classroom, most probably potions because of all the jars.



3. **Mid Shot**

- Contains a figure from the knees/waist up and is normally used for dialogue scenes, or to show some detail of action.
- The audience already know where they are and now want to focus on dialogue and character interaction.



4. **Close Up**



- This shows very little background, and concentrates on either a face, or a specific detail of mise en scène.
- Everything else is just a blur in the background. This shot magnifies the object and shows the importance of things, be it words written on paper, or the expression on someone's face.
- The close-up takes us into the mind of a character. A film-maker may use this to make us feel extra comfortable or extremely uncomfortable about a character, and usually uses a zoom lens in order to get the required framing.

ANGLES:

1. **Bird's Eye View**



- This shows a scene from directly overhead, a very unnatural and strange angle. Familiar objects viewed from this angle might seem totally unrecognisable at first (umbrellas in a crowd, dancers' legs).
- This shot does, however, put the audience in a godlike position, looking down on the action. People can be made to look insignificant, ant-like, part of a wider scheme of things.

2. **Eye Level**



- A fairly neutral shot; the camera is positioned as though it is a human actually observing a scene, so that actors' heads are on a level with the focus.

3. **Low Angle**



- Low angles help give a sense of confusion to a viewer, of powerlessness within the action of a scene.
- The added height of the object may make it inspire fear and insecurity in the viewer, who is psychologically dominated by the figure on the screen.



Details of the Film:

Year Released: 2016

Rating: 12

Director: John Carney

Script: John Carney

Cast: Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, Lucy Boynton, Jack Reynor, Aidan Gillen, Maria Doyle Kennedy and others.

Characters and Cast:



1. **Conor (Cosmo) Lawlor:**
   - Conor is the film's protagonist or main character. He's 15 years old.
   - He is bullied and picked on in Synge Street and is mocked for being posh.
   - He forms the band in order to impress Raphina but ends up enjoying being creative and making music.
   - He is really close to his older brother Brendan and asks him for advice about music and girls.
   - He is determined and becomes more rebellious as the film goes on. He mocks Brother Baxter at the school disco and eventually leaves school to go to England with Raphina.



2. **Raphina**

- Raphina is a 16 year old girl from a difficult family background who is trying to make it as a model.
- She originally appears to be in the band's music video for *The Riddle of the Model*. She suggests ideas for makeup and styling.
- She is supportive of the band's music and willing to commit for art. She jumps into the harbour when shooting one of their videos because it will make the video better.
- She is in an on-and-off relationship with Eamon who is much older and physically hits her.
- Her father is dead while her mother is in hospital due to being a manic depressant.
- She dreams of escaping and going to London so that she can pursue her dream of being a model.

- She gives Conor the nickname Cosmo. She realises that if he's going to be in a band, he needs a cooler alter ego.

3. Brendan Lawlor:



- Brendan is Conor's older brother who at the start of the film has already dropped out of college.
- He is passionate about music and often gives advice and opinions to Conor about various bands. He also frequently smokes marijuana.
- He encourages him to follow his dream of music and to take something of himself.
- He finds it difficult to be considered a failure and a dropout. He blames their parents for not showing him much attention when he was younger.
- He is the one who drives Conor and Raphina to Dalkey at the end of the film, supporting their decision to leave Ireland.

4. Barry:



- Barry begins the film as the school bully. He targets Conor almost immediately when Conor arrives in Synge Street. He humiliates him by making him dance under the threat of violence.
- He comes from a difficult family situation in which it is clear that his parents are alcoholics.
- He joins the band as a roadie to escape his tough home situation and to make something of himself.
- He is partially responsible for the band's success at the school dance.

5. Eamon:

- Eamon is the most musically talented out of the group in the band. Eamon can play multiple instruments and helps Conor to write the music to their songs.



- Eamon lives at home and it is clear that his mother loves him. She often sits in or is involved in their rehearsals.
- He can get embarrassed by her intruding but it is clear that they get along overall.
- He also owns many rabbits as pets.

6. **Darren:**

- Darren is the first friend that Conor makes when he arrives in Synge Street. Darren helps Conor deal with Barry's bullying.
- Darren is the person that Conor pretends is the band's manager to impress Raphina.
- He is the source of much comic relief in the film.



7. **Penny Lawlor:**

- She is Conor's mother. She, along with her husband, make the decision to move Conor from a Jesuit school in Dublin to Synge Street Secondary School. We know that she is unhappy in her marriage as she begins an affair with Tony, a man from work.
- Conor's mother is unhappy in her job as well and rushes home from work to enjoy going out in the sun.
- She moves out of the family home and in with her new partner Tony.



8. **Robert Lawlor:**

- Conor's father. He also makes the decision to send Conor to Synge Street because of financial issues.
- He gives his oldest son Brendan a hard time over dropping out of college.
- Throughout the film, he spends much of his time arguing with Conor's mother.



Brother Baxter:



- Baxter is part of the Christian Brothers and is the headmaster of Synge Street.
- He is strict and authoritative to both students and to teachers.
- He immediately takes a dislike to Conor about the fact that Conor is wearing the wrong colour shoes. He embarrasses him by making him go without.
- He is physically aggressive with Conor when Conor refuses to take off the makeup that he's worn to school.
- It is clear that the rest of the school hate him also when they join in to the band's song "Brown Shoes" which mocks him.

Setting:



- The film takes place in Dublin during the 1980s.

- The locations where this film were shot include Synge Street CBS, St Catherine's Park and Coliemore Harbour on Dalkey Island.

- The grungy, dirty laneways and buildings seen in the film demonstrate how the 1980s were a time of economic difficulty in Ireland. There was high unemployment as well as high emigration. The problem of emigration is mentioned throughout the film, with Raphina constantly saying that she will have to get out of Ireland to successfully become a model.



- The director of this film, John Carney, actually attended Synge Street when he was a student. The dark, old-fashioned classrooms represent how this school is seen as repressive and restrictive for its students with its many rules.

- The coastal settings are seen as a places of possibility. Out in Dun Laoghaire is the first place where Conor and Raphina kiss after shooting a music video. Dalkey is where they go to escape at the end of the film when they decide to go to England together.

- The time and setting also influences the character's fashion choices, slang words and accents.



Plot Summary:

- In south inner-city Dublin in 1985, the Lawlor parents announce that in order to save money he is taking his youngest son Conor out of his expensive fee-paying school and moving him to a Christian Brothers school, Synge Street CBS.
- Conor's older brother Brendan mocks him about the change as well as about the state of the family unit.
- Conor appears in school on the first day in his new uniform, but without the regulation black shoes. The school principal Br. Baxter, takes him to task for this despite Conor's pleas of being unable to afford new black shoes, eventually forcing him to complete the day shoeless. The shoe problem is resolved by painting the shoes black using paint from the art room.



- An encounter with the school bully, Barry introduces Conor to Darren, an ally and budding entrepreneur. When Conor tells the beautiful aspiring model, Raphina, in order to impress her, that he needs a model for a music video his band is making, Darren agrees to manage the band and introduces him to multi-instrumentalist Eamon.
- The band practices in Eamon's living room, playing a bunch of 1980s covers. Conor, however, has a sibling-induced epiphany when Brendan encourages him to drop the covers and develop the band's own style. He begins writing original songs with Eamon, describing themselves as "futurists."
- The band film their first music video for their song "The Riddle of the Model", wearing a motley assortment of comical costumes, with Raphina.
- Conor goes into school the next day wearing make up, he gets called into Baxter's office and told to remove the makeup. Conor refuses and as he walks away Baxter grabs him forcing him into the bathroom and forcibly removing the make up by pushing his face into a sink.



- Raphina gives Conor his nickname "Cosmo", which she says is more in keeping with his new band's image and the band continues to write and record new songs.

- After spending the day filming a music video for a new song, Conor and Raphina kiss. Conor also manages to stand up to Barry by pointing out the insignificance of his life as well as his own, which greatly upsets Barry.
- At home Conor's parents' marriage is falling apart, while Raphina and Conor's relationship blossoms. Conor takes Raphina out to Dalkey Island in his granddad's motor cruiser. Here they view the car ferry leaving Dun Laoghaire for Britain and discuss Raphina's dream of leaving Ireland for London.
- Conor, Raphina, and the band then prepare to film a music video for their new song, "Drive It Like You Stole It", but Conor is disheartened when Raphina fails to show up. Later, she reveals that she was set to leave for London with her boyfriend that day, but he abandoned her.
- Deeply hurt by her lack of disclosure and becoming even more offended by her nonchalance, Conor breaks up with Raphina. Because of the break-up, along with his family's problems, Conor finds difficulty in writing or playing music, but Brendan urges Conor to carry on so that at least he can escape his small-town doldrums and make a better future for himself.
- An opportunity arises for the band to play live at an end of year party at school. Conor manages to strike a friendship with Barry, offering him the chance to be the band's roadie and escape the physically and emotionally abusive relationship he has with his alcoholic father, which he accepts.
- Conor prepares a new song, "Brown Shoes", mocking Baxter, which the band perform as an encore while distributing homemade masks of Baxter's face.
- Raphina arrives before the band finishes their song and reconciles with Conor, and both of them leave the party and the school in uproar.
- After secretly saying his goodbyes to his family later that night, Conor and Raphina persuade Brendan to drive them to Dalkey so they can escape in the motor cruiser and head to London.
- Brendan agrees and drives them to the harbour, where Brendan and Conor exchange an emotional embrace. Conor and Raphina sail out to sea, following the ferry across the rough Irish Sea to a new life in London. Brendan watches them disappear into the distance and cheers, overjoyed that his younger brother has left to go on to greater things.



Music in the Film:



- Music plays an important role in this film.
- The soundtrack is composed of popular songs from the 1980s and also original songs that have been written especially for this film.

Name of the Song in the Film:	**Original Artist:**
Stay Clean	Motorhead
The Riddle of the Model	Sing Street Cast
Rio	Duran Duran
Up	Sing Street Cast
To Find You	Sing Street Cast
A Town Called Malice	The Jam
In Between Days	The Cure
Maneater	Hall and Oates
Drive It Like You Stole It	Sing Street Cast
Girls	Sing Street Cast
Brown Shoes	Sing Street Cast

- The music that Conor and the band are listening to at the time, has an influence on the band's direction and how they dress.
- The original songs from the film tell us much about the characters and how they are feeling in that scene. It also tells us what they have been influenced by.
- Conor starts off wearing old fashioned sixties inspired outfits showing that he is unsure about what 'look' the band is going for. His fashion choice is then reminiscent of the artist David Bowie, with his blonde highlights and makeup. His style then looks similar to that of the band, The Cure with the backcombed hair and trench coats. For the 'Drive It Like You Stole It' sequence, Conor imagines he is wearing a burgundy suit, similar to that worn by Marty McFly in the popular Eighties film, "Back to the Future."

Drive It Like You Stole It



Drive it like you stole it

You just can't stand the way that I walked out from the wreckage

Can't understand the way that I turned myself around

I tried to terminate this war

With you

But you won't let it go

You keep coming back for more

Freedom

I'm takin' it back

I'm outta here, no turnin' back

In a baby blue Cadillac

Just when I was stallin'

I heard an angel callin'

This is your life

You can go anywhere

You gotta grab the wheel and own it

And drive it like you stole it

Roll it

This is your life

You can be anything

You gotta learn to rock and roll it

You gotta put the pedal down

And drive it like you stole it

And drive it like you stole it

We get stuck in the dirt

And we can't see where we're going

We face all kinds of hurt

And the friction slows us down

But I won't be waiting here for the world to win me gold

And I'll leave your dust behind me

Stranded in the road

Freedom

I'm takin' it back

Attitude

I'm givin' it back

In a baby blue Cadillac

Just when I was stallin'

I heard an angel callin'

This is your life

You can go anywhere

You gotta grab the wheel and own it

You gotta put the pedal down

And drive it like you stole it

This is your life

You can go anywhere

You gotta grab the wheel and own it

And drive it like you stole it

Roll it

This is your life

You can be anything

You gotta learn to rock and roll it

You gotta put the pedal down

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-ooh-ooh)

And drive it like you stole it

(Hoo, hoo, hoo-ooh-ooh)

And drive it like you stole it

Looking Closer at the Song…



1. What does the dream music-video sequence tell us about Conor? What is it that he wants?

2. Why do you think the video has an American fifties theme rather than being set in Ireland?

3. Are there any particular lines in this song that could relate to Conor's situation?

4. How would you describe the tone of this song?

5. What does this song tell us about being a young person? What does it advise them to do?

Brown Shoes



Who the hell are you to tell me what to do?
You wear a dress and tell me not to wear brown shoes
You think you're man enough to wash the makeup off my face right now?
But don't you know the bigger that they are the harder they fall?
And the boot's on the other foot now
Buckle up, we're taking you down
See, your curtain's falling, so take your bow
And who the hell is he to tell me who to be?
If he wants me dancing, he can watch on MTV
You try to shut me up
I'll turn the volume up and drown you out
But don't you know the bigger that they are the harder they fall?
Yeah, the boot's on the other foot now
Buckle up, we're taking you down
See, your curtain's falling, so take your bow
'Cause you had your time in the sun
And it's no use banging your drum
Now the boot's on the other foot, take your bow
What's gonna define the rest of your life?
Start facing the truth
You're stuck with the lies
Sharp end of your knife is pointing at you
Your up will be down
Just hanging around in gravity boots
You're stuck in the past
I'm writing the future
Yeah, the boot's on the other foot now
Buckle up, we're taking you down
And your mask is slipping, so take your bow
Yeah, you had your time in the sun
Does it hurt when you're kicking someone?
'Cause the boot's on the other foot
Boot's on the other foot
Boot's on the other foot now
Yeah, take your bow

Looking closer at the song…



1. What do you think will be the consequences of Conor performing this song?

2. What specific lines are aimed at Brother Baxter?

3. What is the main message of this song?

4. Which song do you prefer? This or “Drive It Like You Stole It”? Why?

Review of “Sing Street”

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/15/movies/review-sing-street-is-an-80s-love-affair-hair-gel-required.html

If you were not a teenager in the 1980s, John Carney’s “Sing Street” is likely to beguile you with the sweet, universal energy of youth. By the same token, if you were a teenager in that much-maligned decade, the movie might make you feel old and a little cranky. Don’t get me wrong. As a 21st-century moviegoer, I was touched by this pop fable. But as a grizzled survivor of the age of Duran Duran, I found myself picking nits about its musical choices (most of which are three or four years out of sync with the plot) and occasionally resisting its winsome, cheeky, post-punk spirit.



That’s my problem, and it’s a problem less with the film — an autobiographical tribute to Dublin, hair gel and the power of lip-syncing — than with the passage of time and the tiny schisms that open up within a single generation’s experience. The narcissism of small differences, you might say. Envy and regret, you might say. Heaven knows I’m miserable now.

In any case, the charms of “Sing Street” should not be underestimated. Partly because its manner is unassuming and its story none too original — a young man’s coming-of-age amid the chaos of home, the rigidity of school and the riot of stirring hormones and budding ambition — it’s easy to overlook Mr. Carney’s ingenuity and sensitivity. A songwriter himself, he specializes in movies about striving tunesmiths who fuse dreams of glory with the drive for love, connection and authenticity.

In “Once,” his overachieving breakthrough feature, the musical idiom was sincere and acoustic. “Sing Street,” in contrast, embraces the high artifice and self-conscious irony of early and mid-80s mostly British pop, a music replete with cheesy keyboard effects, cotton-candy harmonies and pouty posing. Its hero is not a striving professional, but rather an ardent amateur, a 15-year-old boy who decides to start a band because he wants to impress a girl.

His name is Cosmo, and he’s played with a perfect blend of diffidence, confidence and sly charisma by Ferdia Walsh-Peelo. Cosmo lives with his brother and sister and

their bickering parents (Aidan Gillen and Maria Doyle Kennedy) whose financial worries force Cosmo to change schools. He lands in an institution run by the Christian Brothers. The school, on Synge Street — an address that lends its name to both the film and Cosmo's band — is a rougher scene than he's used to. The bully takes a special interest in him, and so does the autocratic, creepy headmaster.

Cosmo, meanwhile, is smitten with Raphina (Lucy Boynton), a slightly older girl who lives in a nearby group home. She wants to run off to London to become a model, and he offers her a starring role in a music video. This promise leads to a scramble: The young swain needs songs, and also musicians, musical instruments, a video camera, and costumes.

All of that appears, if not quite by magic then by the kind of grace that operates in movies like this one. A pipsqueak sidekick becomes Sing Street's manager and helps Cosmo recruit a songwriting partner with a houseful of equipment. Before long, a quintet takes shape and the tunes — written by Mr. Carney, with an uncanny ear for the styles of the era — start to flow.

Cosmo is tutored in music by his older brother, Brendan (Jack Reynor, looking like an Irish Seth Rogen), a college dropout with an extensive LP collection and a surfeit of rock 'n' roll wisdom. The band cycles through a range of available influences — the Jam, the Cure, Joe Jackson, Hall & Oates — and Cosmo's style of dress changes accordingly. The costume design, by Tiziana Corvisieri, is generally flawless. All those puffy sleeves and acid-washed denim.

The sound mix may be a little too polished for a schoolboy combo cutting demos on a push-button cassette recorder, but Sing Street's videos and songs feel like the plausible products of a precocious sensibility. For its part "Sing Street" is generally up-tempo and sentimental, but its nostalgia is rarely cloying and its plot doesn't feel overly contrived. There is an undercurrent of darkness and frustration rippling under the bright optimism. Around the edges of the story is a penumbra of real trouble: alcoholism, domestic and sexual abuse, stalled careers and broken marriages.

Such trouble inspires Cosmo's fantasy of escape, and also grounds the escapism of "Sing Street" itself in a recognizable reality. The movie understands how enchantment and disappointment go together, like the A and B sides of a single that won't leave the turntable.

1. What are some of the positives that the reviewer enjoyed about this film?

2. What criticisms did he have about this film?

3. How much detail does this reviewer give about the plot?

4. How would you describe the language of this review?

5. In your English copy, write your own review of this film. Be sure to include details of the plot, elements you enjoyed, elements of the film you didn't enjoy and a recommendation.

Key Moment 1- Opening Scene of the Film:

- Black screen, guitar strumming. First shot is close up of protagonist, Conor, with his guitar. Camera zooms out, we see that he is sitting on his bed in his room. We see a poster on the wall behind him, exam papers lying beside him on the bed. We hear muffled voices of adults having an argument. The protagonist slams his bedroom door shut. The camera zooms in on the protagonist as he begins to use the insults he hears as lyrics for an imaginary song.

- Cut to black screen with the words 'Dublin 1984' written on it and a voiceover of a news anchor explaining the emigration of young Irish people for a better life in London. Ireland is in the midst of a deep recession. Camera zooms out to reveal a television screen and a half empty glass of wine on top of the TV set. Panning then and our protagonist is sitting at the kitchen table. We see empty dinner plates, a bottle of wine, a bottle of spirits, and everyone is wearing extra clothes.

- Conor's older brother, Brendan, arrives and is the first to speak; 'This meeting has been called to order'. Conor's father is sitting at the head of the table, smoking. Close up of Dad as he explains Conor's new school arrangements – the family are in extreme financial distress and can no longer afford to send Conor to a private school. He will start in the Christian Brothers, a local public school, founded on the motto, Act Manly. Everyone leaves, Conor is alone at the table, looking miserable.

- Cut to school crest on the side of a building; 'Singe Street'; it's Conor's first day at his new school, dolly shot follows Conor as he makes his way in. There's rock and roll music, and the camera captures the business of the environment from Conor's point of view. There's a lot of unruly activity including school yard fighting and the fast paced music adds to the chaotic atmosphere with the lyrics 'stay clean'. It's hectic and crowded. There is a low angle shot of Brother Baxter overseeing all that is going on.

- Cut to a classroom, Conor is sitting at the top of the class, he obviously stands out as the only student not misbehaving. We see everything from Conor's point of view – nobody is paying attention to the teacher who has his back to the class – students are smoking etc. Brother Baxter enters the classroom and instantly there is order as the students stand to greet him.

- Cut to film title on screen: 'Sing Street' in white letters on a black background. All of this gives us vivid impressions of our protagonist in the opening scene of the film.

Questions about the Opening:

1. What kind of camera effect is used at the very beginning?

2. What is the setting (time and place), what evidence did you find to suggest this?

3. What are the viewers initial impressions of the protagonist from the opening scene of this film?

4. Do we feel pity for the protagonist or do we admire him? Why?

5. What is the significance of the Low Angle Shot of Br. Baxter as Conor walks into school?



Key Moment 2 – Starting the Band

- Conor quickly comes to the attention of headmaster Br. Baxter, with his incorrect school uniform (brown shoes instead of black). He then encounters the school bully, Barry, during a disturbing homophobic and violent scene where Conor stands up for himself.

- At home we see the positive relationship Conor has with older brother Brendan through their shared love of music. We learn more about life at home for Conor as his parents openly drink alcohol and there isn't enough money to put the heating on.

- Tension grows in school over Conor's shoes and we see close up shots of him wearing just his socks as he has been forced to leave his shoes with the headmaster while he is in school, song 'I Fought the Law' by punk rock group The Clash plays in the background. There is another disturbing encounter with Barry then Conor meets Darren and then, Raphina.

- To get Raphina's phone number Conor pretends he's in a band. This scene is shot using low angles of her (powerful) and high angles of Conor (vulnerable). The Dolly Shot of Conor returning to Darren captures his excitement before he states, 'we need to form a band'.

- Darren and Conor call to Eamonn's house and recruit him with Conor exclaiming, 'I'm a futurist…no nostalgia, no looking backwards, just forward.'. Eamonn is clearly very talented and we see his difficult home life situation – his father is a violent alcoholic who is in rehab.

- The next member to be recruited is Nigig and we see elements of racism here as Darren states 'he'll be able to play something, he's black!'. Ariel shots of the boys going to Nigig's house show the setting as a run down block of flats in inner city Dublin.

- The remaining members, bassist Larry and drummer Garry, are recruited when they respond to a poster in school seeking musicians for a 'Futurist band'. They all meet in Eamonn's backyard shed and the band 'Sing Street' is formed. Slow motion camera shot used to show each member exiting the shed suggests power and the start of good things for these boys.

- At their first practice session they play a cover song. However, advice from Brendan inspires Conor to start writing his own songs. The band compose their first song that will be used for a music video featuring Raphina, 'Riddle of the Model'. They set up to shoot the video in a back alley covered with graffiti. We see the that the boys

have developed a relationship and are coming together as a team. Raphina arrives to shoot the video.



Questions about Starting the Band:

1. What problems or difficulties have presented for our protagonist at this point in the film?

2. A key scene during this part of the film is where the band members are gathered together in Eamonn's back garden shed. What can we learn about each member of the group from this scene?

3. What impression do we have of them as a group from this scene? Justify your answer by referring to camera technique(s).

4. What is your opinion of the headmaster, Br. Baxer, by the end of this section of the film? Why?

5. What is your opinion of the relationship between our protagonist and his brother? Explain your answer by referring to the film.

Key Moment 3 - Conor and Raphina (39 minutes)



Conor has written a song called “She Lights Me Up” which is clearly all about Raphina and how much he loves her. The song is uplifting and hopeful about a new relationship. The song’s lyrics are as follows: “I think I'm back in the dream/ I think I'm back on the ceiling/ It's such a beautiful feeling/ Going up/She lights me up/She breaks me up/She lifts me up.”

We see the band playing this song together and it cements the audience’s trust and belief in the band. They are all able to play well and are performing the song with lots of energy and enthusiasm.

We see Conor cycling to Raphina’s house to deliver the tapes of music through the letterbox.

We then see Raphina listening to the music when she’s alone in her room. She has taken off her make-up and appears younger, more vulnerable. She has stripped away all her bravado and we see her as a young girl who has had her heartbroken before. She seems to really like the song and appears to be flattered that they’ve written this piece about her. We see that Raphina is nearly crying while listening to the song.

It then cuts to Eamon’s mother coming into the room with cups of tea for the boys. She starts dancing along to the song, indicating to the audience that it must be good.

Questions about Conor and Raphina:

1. What does the song tell us about how Conor views Raphina?
2. How do you think Raphina feels about Conor?
3. What is the impression that you get of Raphina’s boyfriend?
4. How can we tell that the band has potential?
5. What is the difference between Eamon’s house and Conor’s house when it comes to their families?

Key Moment 4 - Brother Baxter Attacks (42 minutes)

Throughout the film, Conor and Brother Baxter have clashed with each other. When Conor first begins in Synge Street, he is given out to for not wearing the correct shoes. Conor tries to reason with him, saying that his family cannot afford to buy another pair of shoes for school. Brother Baxter then insists that he takes off his brown shoes and until he gets himself a pair of black shoes, he has to walk around all day wearing only his socks. It is clear that Brother Baxter is a stringent, strict and intimidating character who most of the boys in the school are afraid of.

Conor gets into trouble for wearing make-up into school. Brother Baxter tells him "You're a man. Men don't wear make-up." Conor reasons that lots of famous musicians wore makeup, such as Mozart. Brother Baxter mocks Conor, scoffing at the suggestion that he is anything like Mozart. He tells Conor to wash off the make-up before he goes back to class. The scene takes a sinister direction when Baxter says to Conor "You've a fine face. Pretty enough without make-up. Take it off. You can use my bathroom if you like." There's a suggestion that Brother Baxter is making a sexual advance towards Conor at this moment. Conor is clearly uncomfortable and so decides to leave.

While on his way back to class, Brother Baxter grabs him and drags him to the bathroom. Using a bar of soap, he forcibly scrubs the makeup off Conor's face and holds his head down into the sink of cold water. Conor is shocked and horrified at the violence used. There is a suggestion that Brother Baxter is particularly annoyed that Conor didn't decide to use Baxter's own personal bathroom and left the office abruptly. Conor realises that he is quite powerless in Synge Street and that he will be forced to fit in and be like everyone else so long as he stays in this school.



Questions about Brother Baxter:

1. What is your impression of Brother Baxter from the very first scene?
2. Why is he so determined that Conor remove the makeup?
3. Would it have been normal for a boy in the 1980s to get into trouble for wearing makeup in school?
4. Why does Baxter react so violently?
5. Why is this scene important for Conor? What does it teach him and what realisation does he make as a result?



Key Moment 5- Parents' Split (1 hour 5 minutes)



Conor's parents have been continually fighting throughout the film. Brendan has previously told Conor that he thinks that their mother is having an affair with a man in work. The family are all called down into the kitchen to have a family meeting.

We see Brendan, Anne, Conor, his mother and father all anxiously sitting at the table. The atmosphere is tense and awkward. Conor initially thinks that he is in trouble about his exam results and his mother reassures him that it's not. "Your father and I are splitting up." Conor's mother is blunt and delivers this news in a frank and abrupt manner. It's clear that Brendan is annoyed and reacts in a sarcastic manner "Thank you! Finally! I'll go get the bags."

Conor's mother has fallen in love with another man called Tony and she will move into his home. The family house will be sold and Conor's dad will get himself an apartment. The children will live between these two places. The audience finds out that people in Ireland during this time cannot get a divorce so the couple will just be separated. Conor is angry and says plainly "This is bullshit."

Questions about the Parents:

1. What impression do you get of Conor's mother and father?
2. Who of the two parents do you think Conor and Brendan side with? Why?
3. Why does Brendan act relieved when the parents announce their separation?
4. What does this tell us about the type of society Ireland was in the 1980s when it came to divorce?
5. Do you think Conor's mam and dad have tried to be sensitive with this kind of news? Why or why not?

Key Moment 6 – Brendan's Breakdown (1 hour 6 minutes)



Conor is upset about his parent's separation. He had hoped that they would go see him play at the school dance. Brendan criticises Conor's hopefulness saying that they're still the same people, only wrapped up in themselves. He says they've more things to do than go to Conor's "stupid" gig. Conor immediately gets defensive, as Brendan had been his biggest supporter when it came to music.

Brendan then says that he's in withdrawal because he's trying to give up smoking cannabis. He wants to do something with his life, he doesn't constantly want to fit the stereotype of a stoner brother. He talks about how he was talented at music and how he had been physically fit. Brendan talks about how he was alone with his parents for years before Conor came along. "You just moved in my jet stream. People laugh at me, the stoner, the college dropout. But once, I was a fucking jet engine!"

He then starts looking at the records on the shelf and begins throwing them on the ground, smashing them all up. This is deeply upsetting for Conor seeing as though he knows how much Brendan loves these records. Conor awkwardly leaves the room, clearly in shock. He goes to wash his face in the sink and it's clear that he has been crying. He's trying to catch his breath from the shock of everything.

Questions about Brendan's Breakdown:

1. Why does Brendan get so angry in this scene?
2. What point does he make about their parent's marriage?
3. Why is Brendan trying to give up drugs?
4. Is he genuinely annoyed at Conor in this scene or is there another reason?
5. Why does his smashing of the records upset Conor so much?

Key Moment 7 - Drive It Like You Stole It



This is the band's most popular song. Conor has imagined the music video in his head and it's inspired by the film "Back to the Future." He organises background dancers and is going to shoot the video in the school hall. One of his teachers is there to supervise. He invited Raphina to be in the video but she doesn't turn up. This worries him and he's bitterly disappointed that she doesn't come to shoot the video. He tries to teach the other young people how to do "fifties dancing" but begins to realise that they are not co-ordinated and wonders if this will look as good as he wants.

We then cut to a dream-like sequence where Conor tries to imagine what this video would ideally look like. This tells us a lot about Conor's character and what he really wants. The hall is decorated with bright colours and everyone is wearing old-fashioned, 1950s style clothing. The band is wearing smart suits and they are performing with the audience cheering and dancing along. It feels very Americanised and joyful. Raphina enters the dance, looking glamorous. It is clear from the way that she looks at Conor that she is impressed.

Brother Baxter also enters the dance by completely backflips. He is jovial and ready to socialise. It is completely different from the Brother Baxter that we have met earlier on in the film. As the song continues, Raphina's boyfriend begins to hassle her. We see Brendan arrive on motorbike to the dance, looking like James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause." He looks healthy, happy and has cut his hair. He sticks up for Raphina and himself and Raphina's boyfriend engage in a knife battle, similar to something out of "West Side Story." The fight gets resolved peacefully without any bloodshed.

Conor's parents walk into the dance, hand in hand. They are smiling and happy, clearly in love with each other. This is in sharp contrast to their previous fighting and arguing throughout the film.

Everyone in the hall gets together for a choreographed dance sequence and it's clear that Sing Street are playing to an audience that loves them.

Conor then begins to snap out of his daydream and we realise that all that has happened on screen for the past few moments has been simply just a fantasy. It tells us that Conor wants Raphina to love him, for Brother Baxter to stop giving him a hard time, for Brendan to succeed and do well and for his parents to reconcile.

Questions about Drive It Like You Stole It:

1. What does this tell us about Conor's character?
2. How does he imagine the dance? Describe the atmosphere and the setting.
3. What does this tell us about his relationship with his brother Brendan and their parents?
4. Why do you think this scene is in the film?
5. What is the impact on the audience at the end of the scene? How does the audience feel when we realise that this has all been a fantasy?
6. What films or types of films may have inspired this scene?



Key Moment 8 - The Dance



During the dance, the band has played well. They've gotten the crowd on their side and despite being mocked initially, the audience has reacted well. They decide to play a slow song, a ballad, in the middle of their set which causes a lot of the audience to clear out, however they return for the final song.

Conor informs other members of the band to give out masks with Brother Baxter's face on it. They sing the song "Brown Shoes" despite Brother Baxter's warnings that they will be expelled if they say anything negative. While playing, everyone wears these masks and eventually Brother Baxter leaves in a furious rage. Conor knows that he will probably be expelled from school for doing this, but he doesn't care.

Raphina watches this final dance happen and she looks up at Conor admiringly. Herself and Conor run out of the school hall, hand in hand when the final song is played.

Questions about the Dance:

1. Who is the target of Conor's song "Brown Shoes"?
2. What is the title of the song in reference to?
3. What are the consequences of Conor singing this song?
4. What does this scene tell us about Sing Street as a band?
5. Is this the final dance that Conor imagined? Why or why not?



Key Moment 9 - End Scene

The ending presents audiences once again with the main themes of the film; young love and escapism. Conor has performed at the end of year disco with his band and is celebrating its success. This is happening at the same time that his life at home continues to be difficult for him. The concert and his music continues to offer him an escape from his sad reality. Raphena comes to his concert and it is clear to audiences that she has fallen in love with Conor.

The young couple decide that there is nothing left for them in Ireland. They are going to run away together to London and try and forge a career as a model and a musician. This idea presents audiences with a very romantic, almost fairy-tale version of young love. The music used in the soundtrack at this point in the film is upbeat and exciting to match the action of the characters on screen. Conor returns home to collect his stuff and say one final goodbye to his mum, as he gets set to leave his old life behind. Conor's older brother, Brendan gives them a lift to the harbour. This part of the film is emotional, as Conor must say goodbye to his brother, whom he loves dearly. The closing scene of the movie is symbolic of Brendan's comment of being a 'jet stream' – Conor and Raphena have decided to follow their dream, they are unsure what their future holds, but are happy to be together, against all odds.

Questions about the End Scene:

1. Do you think that Conor and Raphina were right to head to London?
2. What dangers might face them as they travel to London?
3. Are they leaving much behind in Ireland?
4. Do you think that Brendan is inspired by their actions?
5. How would you describe the tone of the ending? As an audience member, were you happy with the ending?



Important Quotes:

“Rock and roll is a risk. You risk being ridiculed.” – Brendan to Conor

“But that’s what love is – happy-sad.” – Raphina to Conor

“You can never do things by half, do you understand that?” – Raphina to Conor

“You just moved in my jet stream. And people laugh at me, Conor. The stoner, the college dropout. And they praise you, which is fine! But once, I was a fucking jet engine!” – Brendan to Conor

“I think she's this amazing human being. Never seen anyone like her.” – Conor talking about Raphina to Brendan.

“And you're gonna use somebody else's art to get her? Are you kidding?” – Brendan to Conor

“Ok, so this is our last song. It's called Brown Shoes. And it's for every Christian Brother and for every bully you ever knew.” – Conor to the crowd at the dance.

“The band will be fine. Just go to London and get a record deal, come back and get us out of this shithole.” – Eamon to Conor