

FILM STUDIES



Hunt for the Wilderpeople – Directed by Taika Waititi

In this film unit, you will learn about:

- Film Techniques
- Mise-en-scene
- Key Scenes
- Dialogue

FILM INFO

Title: Hunt for the Wilderpeople

Director: Taika Waititi

Writer: Taika Waititi

Based on the book 'Wild Pork and Watercress' by Barry Crump

Year: 2016

Country: New Zealand

Runtime 1 hour 41 minutes

Let's Meet the Characters

Character – Name and Picture	Description (fill in as you watch the film)
Ricky Baker (Julian Dennison)  A young man with dark hair, wearing a grey knit beanie and a red jacket over a purple shirt. He has dark, smudged marks on his cheeks and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression in a forest setting.	
Uncle Hec (Sam Neill)  An older man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a blue jacket over a grey sweater. He is standing in a forest with ferns and trees in the background.	
Aunt Bella	

(Rima Te Wiata)



Paula
(Rachel House)



Officer Andy

(Oscar Kightley)



Psycho Sam
(Rhys Darby)



NEW ZEALAND'S BUSH



In New Zealand, 'The Bush' primarily refers to areas of native trees rather than exotic forests, however, the word is also used in the Australian sense of anywhere outside urban areas, encompassing grasslands as well as forests.

The New Zealand usage of "bush" probably comes from the word "bosch", used by Dutch settlers in South Africa, where it meant uncultivated country.

Areas with this type of land cover are found predominantly in the South Island, especially in the West Coast region stretching from Fiordland to Nelson, with the east coast having been deforested except for parts of Kaikoura and the Catlins. Much of Stewart Island/Rakiura is bush covered.



History of New Zealand / Maori people

The Maori, meaning 'people of the land', are one of the native peoples of Polynesia, that inhabit the islands of New Zealand. Modern research has concluded that the distant ancestors of all Polynesian people are the indigenous aboriginals of Taiwan. In ancient times, these people had begun an epic journey, beginning from Taiwan, heading toward South Asia, island hopping for many years before finally reaching their new homes, and settling in New Zealand, Hawaii, Samoa, Cook Islands, Easter Island and the rest of the smaller islands scattered around the Pacific Ocean. First arrivals of people on New Zealand date back to 1280 A.D.



- The first Europeans known to have reached New Zealand were Dutch explorer Abel Tasman and his crew in 1642. Four of them and one Maori were killed. Europeans did not revisit NZ until 1769 when British explorer James Cook mapped almost the entire coastline.
- Following him, several ships cruised near NZ trading food, metal tools, weapons and other goods for timber, food, artefacts, water etc. Europeans introduced potatoes, diseases and animals. The introduction of weapons resulted in Musket Wars with the Maori tribes and over 30,000 Maori were killed. Their population declined 40% during the 19th century.
- In 1840 Britain colonised NZ. That year, the Maori signed the Treaty of Waitangi, by which they recognised British sovereignty in exchange for guaranteed possession of their land. However, conflict between the Maori and white settlers continued until 1870, when there were few Maori left to resist.
- Today, only 9.2% of the population of NZ are Maori, though it is starting to increase. Traditional Maori songs, dances carving, and the Maori language are being taught in schools.
- However, racism is rife, even today. Maori people lack the same access to healthcare, education and employment, as they are often discriminated against. The treatment of Ricky that *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* depicts – as a hooligan, a repeat offender, an animal, a threat or danger that must be caught and restrained – is evidence of the ingrained racism that targets young Māori men especially.

Plot Summary

In this quirky comedy, a troubled kid who loves everything hip-hop and writing haikus, is relocated by foster care in New Zealand's countryside. Aunt Bella and Uncle Hec are one of kind and Ricky Baker soon finds himself experiencing first-hand what it's like to be a kid living so close to

the “bush”, or wild, undeveloped land. When tragedy strikes and the threat of leaving his new home becomes reality, Ricky and Hec escape into the bush, resulting in a national man/child hunt.

What is a haiku?

A Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five, traditionally evoking images of the natural world.

DIRECTOR TAIKA WAITITI



Taika David Waititi (born 16 August 1975), also known as Taika Cohen, is a New Zealand film director, writer, actor, painter and comedian. He was nominated for an Academy Award for his 2004 short film *Two Cars, One Night*. His feature films *Boy* and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* became the top grossing New Zealand films. His horror comedy mockumentary film *What We Do in the Shadows* also received critical acclaim.

Themes and tone:

Characters that Waititi write and direct are ones that are on the outskirts of society, lonely, strange, etc. whom he shows in a **sympathetic and humorous light**. His intention is to have the audience laugh with these characters and not necessarily at them.

The focus is often on respecting nature, the coastal and forest regions of New Zealand, the indigenous culture of these places, longing for companionship, and the celebration of innocence.

Humour is the primary genre Waititi works in, but not without balancing it with a story that has **emotional** weight. He treats these characters with respect and has them go through real pain and struggles.

MAKING OF HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE



- Based on the book 'Wild Pork and Watercress' by Barry Crump
- \$2.5 million budget (very small)
- Shot on one camera except for the final chase scene
- 95% of the scenes were outside and in filmed in the bush of New Zealand.
- *Costumes:* There's between six and eight of each key item of clothing, two at each level of disrepair, so that the stunt men and stand-ins aren't swapping trousers with Neill. Professional textile artists have used cheese-graters and blowtorches to get them to exactly the right level of dishevelment.
- The pig was a suit that had two people inside it.

Film Techniques – Key Terminology

Aerial Shot

A shot from high above, usually of exterior locations and taken from a crane or helicopter

Chiaroscuro

The dramatic lighting technique of contrasting areas of light and dark

Cinematography

The art and technique of motion picture photography. This includes how the film uses light, shadow, colour, movement, and composition within the frame.

Crane Shot

A camera movement in which the camera travels along a vertical axis with the action of the shot

Diegetic Sound

Any sound that originates within the world of the film

Direct Sound

Music, noise, and dialogue, recorded live while filming

Editing

The selection, manipulation, and combination of shots to create structure and story

Elliptical Editing

An editing technique that abbreviates the time of an action, event, or story through the use of dissolves and jump cuts

Establishing Shot

A wide shot indicating where the scene is taking place.

Extreme Close-Up

A framing that shows only a detail

Flashback

An editing technique that jumps backward in the story to show an earlier time, interrupting the story's timeline

Foley Sound

The process of adding sound during postproduction that emphasizes established sounds of the film.

Foreshadowing

Giving clues or hints to suggest events that will occur later on in the film

Fourth Wall

When the character looks into the camera and directly addresses the audience.

Frame

A single image; when a series of frames is shown in quick succession, the illusion of movement is created.

Freeze Frame

The movement of the film image appears to stop, becoming a still image.

Genres

Types of film recognized by narrative or stylistic conventions

Genre examples: horror, fantasy, comedy, science fiction

High-Key Lighting

Lighting that creates little contrast between the light and dark areas of the shot.

Juxtaposition

The placing of two images side by side in space or time

Low Angle

The camera positioned looking up at the subject, creating a sense or feeling of power and dominance in the character or setting.

Low-Key Lighting

Lighting that creates substantial contrast between light and dark areas of the shot, often using a strong single source of light.

Mise-En-Scène

All the visual elements that are placed in a scene for the camera; this involves the set, set decoration, props, costumes, lighting. Mise-En-Scene means "putting in the scene" in French.

Montage

An editing technique that favours the expressive power of the juxtaposition of shots over narrative continuity or realism. Montage means "editing" in French.

Non-Diegetic Sound

Sound that does not originate from the world of the film, such as narration or musical score

Pan

A camera movement where the camera pivots side to side in a fixed position

POV Shot

A shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, to show how the scene looks from the character's perspective.

Pre-Production

The first stage of filmmaking, which may include planning, budgeting, scripting, casting, and building sets

Production

The second stage of filmmaking, which is actually shooting the film

Post-Production

The third stage of filmmaking, which includes editing and exporting

Scene

Several shots edited together to tell a discrete part of the story.

Score

The musical soundtrack created specifically for a film, emphasizing the tone and emotion.

Screenplay (script)

The written instructions, dialogue, and scene descriptions for a film's story

Shot

A single uninterrupted section of footage

Shot/Reverse-Shot

A compositional technique used to show alternating shots between characters while in conversation.

Talking Head

A shot of a person speaking toward the camera, traditionally used in documentary film

Three-Point Lighting

A traditional lighting setup for film, using three lights: a backlight, key light, and fill light.

Titles

Text that appears on screen

Tracking Shot

A camera movement in which the camera travels along with the action of the shot, for example moving backward or forward.

Voice-Over

The voice of an unseen off-screen character or narrator that is heard by the audience

Zoom

The use of the zoom lens, which causes the image to increase in size (zoom in) or decrease in size (zoom out) without camera movement

Mise-En-Scene

Mise-en-scene is a French term meaning ‘what is put into the scene or frame.’

What is put in or left out can make a big difference to the signals we, the audience, receive about what sort of film it is and how we are supposed to feel at this point. For example, a simple shot of a tree can be made to look threatening by stripping it of leaves, adding a vulture and some lightening and shooting it in darkness. The same tree can be given a very different look by having children playing beneath its sunlit branches.



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The Elements of Mise-En-Scene

When looking at mise-en-scene there are **five essential film techniques** to consider. These techniques are:

1. Settings and Props
2. Costume, hair and make-up
3. Facial expression and body language
4. Lighting and colour
5. Positioning of characters and objects within the frame.

Settings and Props

Settings

The settings used in a film are very rarely just backgrounds to the characters' dialogue and indeed we will often see shots of places, without any action taking place. They can be used to influence an audience by building certain expectations and then the action takes a different turn, e.g. in a horror set in a normal city setting.

Filmmakers can choose to build a setting from scratch using the bare walls and floor of a studio set; alternatively, a great deal of time and effort is put in by a location manager in the initial stages of making a film to find a setting that already exists.

Props

A prop is the term we give to objects in the setting which play a part in the action, rather than just being part of the background, for example, a glass containing some poisoned wine.



Costume, Hair and Make-up

Costume

Costume plays a large part in the mise-en-scene because it can be an instant to us all of a character's personality, social status and job. It tells us immediately whether the film is set in the present and what society and/or culture it will centre around. It may also provide a clue as to the part the character will play in the action. Certain types of costume are identified closely with individual genres. Can you think of any?

Make-up

In the early days of cinema, make-up was used to highlight facial features as black and white film stock could not register detail very well. Certain genres traditionally use make-up more than others.

Consider;

- What costume features would you expect to see in a western?
- What costume features do you associate with villains?/ Heroes?
- Which genres do you think make more use of make-up and why?



Facial Expressions and Body Language

Facial Expressions

On film, the camera can be at a range of distances portraying the actor/actress in extreme close-up or as a dot in the distance of a long shot. This range of distance means that there will be different emphasis placed on facial expressions and body language according to the type of shot.

Facial expressions are a clear indicator of how someone is feeling. Small changes to someone's face can send out totally different signals; if someone is smiling broadly, we assume they are happy, but if this is held for too long we begin to worry as this is not normal behaviour.

Eyes give particularly important signals to us when we are trying to read someone's expression and it is usual for us to follow the direction of their sight, so if a filmmaker wants to draw attention to a feature s/he can use this to make the audience focus on something or someone in the frame.

Body Language

The way in which we hold and move our bodies also indicates how we are thinking and feeling. As with facial expressions, everyone is different, but there are some things which we all recognise such as curling up into a ball to protect ourselves or shaking a fist at someone to express anger.

Lighting and Colour

These elements help to create mood and atmosphere.

- The audience's attention can be guided by lighting an object or gesture important to the storyline whilst keeping other details in relative darkness.
- A director can use shadows to build up suspense by concealing items in the scene from the audience.
- Alternating bright and dark light can be used to create an effect of confusion.
- The connotations carried by colours can be used to support mood – red, black and greens etc.
- Certain colours are associated with cultural conventions.
- The absence of vivid colours where these might be expected or changes in use of colour by the director should be noted.
- These are elements often analysed as part of mise-en-scene.

Some Examples of Lighting

The lighting director is the person responsible for the creative aspects of lighting when shooting a film. S/he manipulates the basic studio lighting format to achieve the atmosphere s/he wishes to express.

Low key lighting

This is created by using only the key and back lights. This will produce a sharp contrast of light and dark areas on the screen as very deep, distinct shadows are formed.

High key lighting

This means that more filler lights are used. The term means lighting that appears normal and realistic to our eyes. It can therefore be used to describe lighting being used on brightly lit sets such as a sunny day in the park.

Positioning of characters & objects within a frame

There are various ways in which the filmmaker can use positioning within the frame. For instance;

- If the filmmaker chooses to position a character or an object in the foreground of the shot we know that we, as an audience, should attach importance to this character or object.
- A moving body or object placed against a stationary background will immediately draw our attention as it would in real life.
- If characters or objects are positioned evenly within the frame this will give a balanced feel to the shot. All figures at one end of the shot would make it appear imbalanced.
- The filmmaker can use positioning to indicate relationships between people, for example, if lovers are having an argument, they will often be placed at the outside edges of the frame so that there is a lot of physical distance between them. This reflects the emotional distance they are experiencing at this point.

Montage

Quick cuts may be used to bring together events related in theme, but from different times and places. They sometimes involve different characters in what are sometimes called **montages**. Montages might flash images from a person's memory or condense a history of someone's life or the history of a war.

We are very familiar with television commercials that use 30-second or 60-second montages of images to create an emotional mood and associate it

with a product. Music can be the glue that unifies and holds such an advertisement together.

Montages can also be used to compress time and to show a process like the development or deterioration of a relationship very rapidly by quick cuts that compare situations and scenes.

Editing, then, is a vital part of exploring and using visual language and is essential to achieving the meanings and effects that are intended.



We Are Learning To:

- Finish analysing the closing scene of the film
- Form a personal response to the ending of the film

A personal response is a piece of writing in which you **describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings** about a text.

TASK:

In small groups, discuss the following points about the film's ending, and create a **mind-map** of your ideas:

- What happens in the end?
- Were you surprised by the ending? Why / Why not?
- How have **characters** changed from the beginning to the end of the film?
- If you were writing a sequel to this film, what would happen next?
- Is there a **hero** in this film? If so, what makes him / her a hero?
- Does the director send us a **message** in this film? What is that message?

- How does the director use **film techniques** effectively in the final scenes?
- Did you **like** the ending? Explain your point of view.

When you have brainstormed ideas, write your response.

- Aim for one and a half pages (one page minimum)
- Use paragraphs
- Remember, these are **YOUR** thoughts and opinions, but you need to support your points with reference to the film



Film Review

- ✓ Choose a film that you have studied
- ✓ Title of film:
- ✓ Name of film director:
- ✓ Introduce the film
- ✓ Explain what the film is about – no spoilers!
- ✓ Talk about the most interesting character in the film
- ✓ What did you like/dislike about the film?
- ✓ How would you rate the film?
- ✓ Would you recommend the film? What age group is it suited to?

Questions

1. What makes a good comedy? Can a comedy also make you feel sadness and empathy? How does Waititi evoke empathy from the audience in this film?

2. Waititi embraces the naive child within his characters, showing their vulnerable sides. Where do you see this happening in this film? What kind of effect does it have?
3. The director is soon becoming known for his tone and style. While watching the film, see if you can identify what makes the film have its own voice. Look at how shots are framed, special moments that highlight the imagination etc.
4. Waititi likes to show the weaknesses in the macho man persona. How does the film do this? How does it change your perception of Hec and Ricky Baker?
5. Describe Ricky Baker's character in the beginning. The theme of "bad egg" keeps coming up. Who else is seen as a bad egg? Why do they fall into this category?
6. There were a lot of moments that hinted at 80s buddy films and era. How did the film make you unsure of what era we were in? Was it timeless?
7. When did the story take you by surprise and turn in a direction that was unexpected?
8. How did the landscape of New Zealand reveal itself as its own character in the film?