

scarfies



New Zealand Film Study Guide

The following activities are based on the achievement objectives in the New Zealand English curriculum. They may provide a starting point for teachers wishing to design a unit based on the film.

Starring Willa O'Neill, Neill Rea, Ashleigh Seagar, Taika Cohen, Charlie Bleakley & Jon Brazier
Essential Films in association with the New Zealand Film Commission, Portman Entertainment, New Zealand On Air & Film 2 present a Nightmare Productions film Scarfies
Director of Photography Stephen Downes Production Designer Gaylene Barnes Editor Annie Collins
Sound Designer Chris Burt Line Producer Trishia Downie Executive Producers Chris Hamson & Chris Brown
Screenplay Duncan Sarkies and Robert Sarkies Producer Lisa Chatfield Director Robert Sarkies

Writing Poetic

- 1 Write your own story or script in which the morals of the main character/s are tested. Write a moralistic children's story about honesty.
- 2 Write the diary entry of each of the main characters after finding the marijuana crop. Clearly show their individual personalities in their reactions. Read your entries aloud. Can your audience guess the identity of your diarists?
- 3 After brainstorming all the possibilities, write an alternative ending for the film.
- 4 Imagine that the main characters meet at a university reunion ten years later. Script the conversation they might have.
- 5 **Prose**
Rewrite your favourite scene from the film as a piece of prose.
- 6 Write a fuller description of an event in the film which is only briefly mentioned eg the flatmates discussing what they should buy.
- 7 Describe a bedroom to reflect a character's personality, then after reading it aloud have the class guess that character's identity.

Writing Expressive

- 1 Some of the following could be identified as themes relevant to this film.
- 2 Explain each one in terms of the film and give your opinion of its validity.
- 3 Honesty is the best policy.
- 4 Acting unlawfully is OK if you can get away with it.
 - Personalities can change under pressure.
 - There is power in acting as one.
 - The ordinary can be extraordinary.
 - Youth necessarily means unthinking exuberance.
 - Money/Greed is a powerful motivator.
- 5 Define these terms - comedy, thriller, drama. Find examples of aspects of this film which place it into each of these genre.
- 4 This film is visually impressive. Discuss.
- 5 The ending of this film has been described as bitter-sweet. Explain
- 6 This film is about ordinary people in an extraordinary situation. Discuss.
- 7 The characters in this film are unlikeable but believable. Discuss.



- 8 What would you do in a similar situation? Why? As a class, put it to the vote the way the students did in the film. Is democracy a suitable way to decide such a thing?
- 9 Nicole says, 'Love is like a prison.' Do you agree? Why/why not?
- 10 What would you do with \$50,000?
- 11 Make a list of things that you think make this film particularly "New Zealand".
- 12 What view of student life does this film give you?
- 13 Threats + Accusations - Violence. Explain this diagram with reference to the film.
- 14 What scenes in this movie do you find suspenseful? Why?
- 15 Are the characters in this film mere caricatures? Why/why not?
- 16 Who is your favourite/least favourite Scarfie? Why?
- 17 Explain why Emma is so upset at the end of the film?
- 18 How does the intruder "play" the students?
- 19 Is the ending satisfactory? Why/why not?
- 20 What do you think music adds to this film? How?
- 21 Scott says that to be a good criminal you have to be 'organised, committed, disciplined'. Would you agree? To what other activities are these qualities required for success?
- 22 'There's nothing square about being responsible' (Nicole). Comment.
- 23 'Normal means no personality' (Emma). Comment.
- 24 Attempt to explain this film's censor's rating.

Transactional Writing

- 1 Collect any film reviews and make a list of positive, negative and neutral words used to describe various aspects of film (eg visually stunning/technically accomplished/dull camera work; atmospheric/evocative lighting; absurd/stunning/state-of-the-art special effects; wooden/convincing/inspired acting; predictable/original/confusing plot; realistic/natural/leaden/contrived dialogue). From your list, choose (and add) words you think appropriately describe this film. Write your own film review.
- 2 Draw up two flow diagrams. In the first, write a plot summary of the film. In the second, change one event in the plot to alter the outcome of the film.
- 3 Design a chart to show the relationships and changes within relationships in the film.
- 4 Write down between five and ten quotes from the film. Explain how your chosen quotes help your understanding of a character or theme or situation.
- 5 Complete character studies of the main characters. Include their personality, reactions to events and interactions with others. Present it in written or diagrammatic form.
- 6 **News Article**
Either imagine that the flatmates reported the crop when they first discovered it, or that the whole episode was discovered at the end, and write an appropriate news article.
- 7 After researching the topic, design a persuasive leaflet for or against the decriminalisation of marijuana.
- 8 Compose a dictionary of New Zealandisms/colloquialisms used in the film. Follow formal dictionary layout.
- 9 Write a treatment for a TV documentary on an idea suggested by the film.
- 10 Write a television news item or interview based on an event/s in the film
- 11 Write a psychologist's report on one of the main characters.
- 12 Write a letter to the director giving your opinions about the film's locations.

Essays

- “Scarflies” is a prime example of the kiwi gothic film tradition. Discuss.
 - Russell Baillie, in The New Zealand Herald said, ‘it’s a movie that makes its audience laugh in recognition’. Would you agree?
 - “Scarflies” is about moral disintegration. Discuss.
 - ‘It’s shift from opening fizziness to black comedy exuding menace, paranoia and contemplations of murder makes Scarflies quite a ride – though its occasional detour into slapstick does loosen the tightly wound tension, and makes for a couple of flat patches later in the piece’ (ibid.). Discuss the “ride” that is “Scarflies”.
- 13 Research: Research one of the following topics (all related to the film).

What I Know	What I Want To Know	What I Learned

Topics

Duncan Sarkies; Robert Sarkies; Dunedin; marijuana; decriminalisation of marijuana; Hendrix; Speight's; Ray Columbus; gothic film/literature; New Zealand film; “Shallow Grave”; “Homegrown”; rugby; The Clean; Flying Nun; Bike; Straightjacket Fits; 1980s New Zealand; Carisbrook; “A Simple Plan”.



Personal Reading

Read and comment on reviews of the film. References made in this study guide, and other texts which may be useful, are listed below.

References

- Cairns, B & Martin, H: *Shadows on the Wall – A Study of Seven New Zealand Feature Films*, Longman Paul, Auckland 1994.
- Dennis, J. & Bieringa, J: (Eds) *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Victoria University Press, Wellington 1996.
- Horrocks, R: *On Film*, Heinemann, Auckland 1980.
- IPL Books: *Celluloid Dreams – A Century of Film in New Zealand*, IPL Books, Wellington 1997.
- McDonnell, B: *Fresh Approaches to Film*, Addison Wesley Longman New Zealand Ltd, Auckland 1998.
- Martin, H. & Edwards, S: *New Zealand Film 1912 – 1996*, Oxford University Press, Auckland 1997.
- Partridge, D. & Hughes, P: *Flicks – Studying Film as Text*, Oxford University Press, Australia 1992.

Reviews

- www.hamiltoncity.co.nz/entertainment/movie_reviews
- <http://nofreelist.com/review>
- www.gumboot.co.nz
- <http://crash.ihug.co.nz/~Sbasket/scarfies.htm>
- http://masseynews.ac.nz/magazine/2001_Nov/stpries/gothic.html
- www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment
- www.listner.co.nz



Speaking/listening/ Interpersonal/Using Text

1 Continuum

As your teacher calls out the following statements, physically place yourself on a continuum, from strongly disagree, through neutral, to strongly agree. For each statement, pair up with someone who disagrees with your stand. Discuss your viewpoint with that person.

- This film is dark.
- This film is funny.
- This film has no messages for us.
- The main characters aren't criminals because they have a conscience.
- The students in this film have no moral standards.
- This film has an interesting storyline.
- The ending of this film is bitter-sweet.
- The ending of this film is cliched and simplistic.

2 Brainstorm what makes this film especially "New Zealand".

3 In groups, make a list of the colloquialisms used in the film. Use this list to help you write a colloquial summary of the film, then present it to the class. Translate your colloquial summary into formal language for a written plot summary.

4 Have each student write down five questions for main characters, allocate roles, then hold a press conference.

5 Script and present a talk show episode with the characters from the film as guests.

6 Monologue

As one of the film's characters, write and present a monologue in which you give your views on life; your views/emotions about things that happened to you and the people in your life (over the course of the film); how you change/did not change over the course of the film.

7 Beauty and the Beast/How's Life: In pairs or groups, write a problem-page type letter as a character. Select a panel and presenter, then have them reply to the letters.

8 Circle Talk

Students form two circles with equal numbers. One stands inside the other, facing outward. The outer circle face the middle.

Students talk to each other on various topics for a preset time, before one circle moves clockwise, so that all students experience a series of partners with whom to share their thoughts. Topics might include:

- My favourite part of the film was...
- My least favourite part of the film...
- I thought the character... was...
- I thought... was the best actor because...
- The things I learned were...
- I would change the ending of this film by...
- The most colourful character was... because...

9 Character Decision Grid

In pairs, discuss and complete a character grid, like the one below, for a main character.

Decision	What it shows about the character	Evidence (quote, shot, image etc)

10 Narrative Structure

As a class, write down between five and ten main events that seem to lead to the conclusion. Change or delete one event, then discuss how the story might change as a result.

- 11 **Character** usually you will identify with the character shown most positively. Groups take one major character each, discuss and fill in a character chart like the one below. Discuss your findings.

Negative Traits	Positive Traits

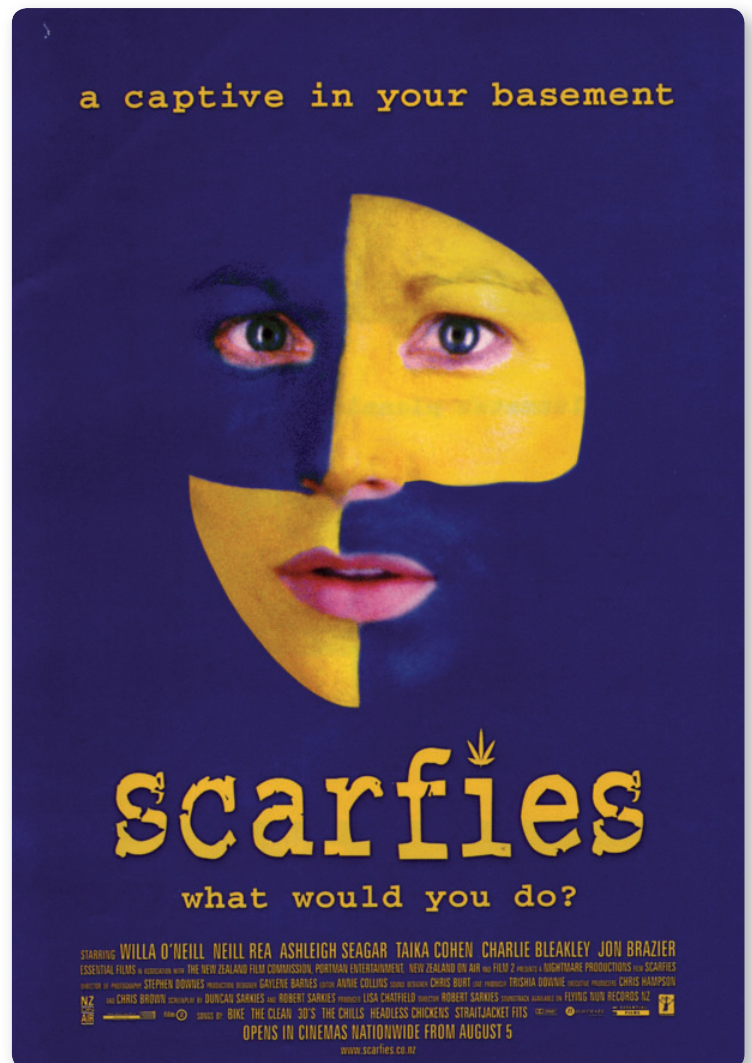
Presenting

- 1 Design a poster advertising the film.
- 2 Choose one of the flatmates and imagine that they are trying to find another flat. Design a poster in which they advertise themselves as a suitable flatmate or alternatively, choose a flatmate, imagine that they are trying to find the perfect flatmate and write the classified advertisement they might put in the local paper.
- 3 Design a collage representing one or more important ideas in the film.
- 4 Design a card/board game based on events in the film.
- 5 Design a tourist brochure advertising Dunedin.
- 6 Storyboard a promotional preview for "Scarflies".
- 7 Design symbols for some of the main characters. Be prepared to justify your choices. Draw and label a plot graph which shows important events and climaxes in the film.
- 8 Design two leaflets – one aimed at students encouraging them to study at Otago University and one aimed at students' parents aimed at encouraging them to send their children to Otago University.
- 9 Design your own face painting to represent your province. Be prepared to explain it.

Viewing and Close Reading

- 1 Sequencing Activity: in groups, write each of a series of important plot incidents on cards. Practise putting them in order. Practise putting the cards of other groups in order.
- 2 Choose and view a scene from the film. View it again with the sound off. Write alternative dialogue (which you think will change the way people interpret it) for the scene.
- 3 Choose a shot and freeze it. Explain what is shown and how it is shown.
- 4 Stop the film soon after the start and predict what might happen; stop the film at various points and predict what might happen; stop the film just before the end and predict what might happen.

- 5 View scenes involving the “intruder”. List ways the film maker has revealed his personality. Collect quotes to support your portrayal.
- 6 Sequencing: Jigsaw Groups - In groups, take one of the following topics then re-view the film, taking notes and discussing your findings. Re-group so that each new group member has different expertise. Teach your new group about your topic.
- 7 Possible Topics
 - Symbolism
 - Sound (eg mood music; song choice)
 - Dialogue
 - Film Techniques (types of shot and their purpose)
 - Dialogue
 - Themes
 - Setting
 - Humour
- 8 Re-view the opening sequence during which we are introduced to the students, and list what you learn from it.
- 9 Reading Film: View suitable sequences, eg:
 - The “discovery” sequence, from the close up shot of the key going into the lock to the shot of Emma - ‘Can we make a profit from this?’, Scott and Alex (approximately 1 minute).
 - The “rugby/intruder” sequence, from the shot of the car leaving for the rugby match to the shot of the scarf on the stairs (approximately 3 minutes).
 - The “intruder/collapsing bed” sequence, from the shot of Emma and Scott in bed - “How’s that?” - to the shot of the intruder - “Is he dead?” (approximately 1 minute 20).
- 10 Answer the following questions:
 - How do the following things contribute to the mood of the sequence? Sound/Dialogue/Shot Types, angles, duration/Lighting/Editing/Humour.



11 In groups, complete the following 3 Level Guide:

Level 1 : Reading on the Lines

Tick the statements which focus on what the film maker says (presents directly) in this film.

When you've made your decisions, discuss your reasons with your group.

- Dunedin is cold.
- Students are poor.
- Spend your money wisely.
- Graham is a nerd.
- Marijuana is a bad influence.
- These characters like each other.

Level 2 : Reading between the lines

Tick statements which you think mean what the film maker meant in this piece. Discuss your choices with your group and be prepared to justify them.

- Students just want to have fun.
- It's hard for people to live together in a group.
- Don't go to university because it's a waste of time.
- These students are greedy.
- You can justify anything if you try hard enough.
- Females are just as strong as males.

Level 3 : Reading beyond the lines

Tick the statements which you think the film maker would support. Be ready to give your reasons when you discuss your choices.

- All decisions have consequences.
- Sometimes ordinary things can lead to the extraordinary.
- People can change under pressure
- Greed is bad.
- Rugby is a bad influence
- Comedy can be black.

From the level 3 section, have students put the chosen statements in a chart, like the one below. Fill in the right hand side with evidence from the film.

Further information

Scarfies was produced in 1999 and is available in New Zealand at all good DVD stores.

This guide was written for New Zealand Film by Cynthia Thomas, who has 23 years teaching experience. © New Zealand Film 2005.

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NEW ZEALAND FILM

TE TUMU WHAKAATA TAONGA