

Cultural Context Cards

Economic Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>Economic classes and issues explored within a film's narrative</p> <p>The economic message or point-of-view of the filmmaker</p> <p>The economic influence or impact caused by a film or the film's production methods</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What situational elements are captured by the camera to indicate economic status or context?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways are the editing choices in the film symbolic the economic contexts represented within the film? (eg. does the edit communicate an idea of austerity or opulence?)
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does genre communicate the idea of an economic structure to the audience? What choices are made in the mise-en-scene to denote economic structures such as class?
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is mise-en-scene used to portray specific economic classes? What choices are made in the mise-en-scene to denote class? How do these relate to interpersonal structures playing out in the narrative?
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are any motifs, symbols or themes used to represent different socioeconomic classes within the film? What signifiers are used to communicate social class or economic structure?
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which economic classes and/or issues are explored within the narrative? Does the economic status of each character play a significant role in the narrative? How so? Are people from a particular class portrayed negatively or positively? If so, what seems to be the point of that portrayal?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What sound is present that communicates the larger ideas around economics in the film? To what extent does spoken dialogue and the performance of characters communicate economic class or stereotypes?

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the economic message or point of view of the filmmaker? Does the film appear to criticize the socio-economic status quo? In what ways and what aspects? How does the film reflect the economic policies of the time? Was there any aspect of the film's production which had a broader economic impact? (e.g. a pioneering use of a new film element, such as digital special effects, which created a whole new market of jobs...this links to institutional contexts as well) What is the economic message or point of view of the filmmaker? Does the making of the film reflect economic constraints at all? (eg. low budget, simple equipment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there anything significant about how the film was financed? Was it released in a film theatre or on an online platform? Was the film released for free? If so, how does this impact how the film was received?

Cultural Context Cards

Geographical Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>The geographic location of a film's origin.</p> <p>The region that is depicted in the film.</p> <p>The colonial or postcolonial legacy addressed by the film.</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the camera used to portray the place and space of the film's geographic location? How is camera framing used to portray the geographic context within the film? How is the camera used to establish characters in the film?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the edit influenced by where the film is made? (eg. Formalist, Classical Hollywood style) In what ways is the edit indicative of the geography within the film (eg. rural, urban environments)
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the chosen genre make use of the geographical context within the film? What does it represent in the narrative? What choices are made in the mise-en-scene to denote ideas regarding spatial and interpersonal relationships within the film?
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the film use its specific geographic locations to help tell its story? How and why are these significant? How are physical elements or artefacts of the mise-en-scene used to communicate the geographic location of the film's?
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there patterns of behaviour used to represent/portray characters that are tied to geographic contexts? (eg. tradition, ritual, culture)
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the film address a colonial or postcolonial legacy? Is the film seemingly content to reinforce traditional stereotypes of minority characters? Or does it seem to be working against them and how so?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the sound used to portray the time, place and space of the film's geographic location?

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
<p>Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where was this film made? How is the country of origin viewed? Which region is depicted in the film? Given what you know about the place or time portrayed in the film text, are there groups of people not shown or barely acknowledged in the movie who are nonetheless significant in the geographic location the film is set within? Why do you think they are not portrayed in this movie? 	<p>Critical response and reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film's geographic context received upon release? How is the same film viewed today? Does the film use visual cues in lighting, camera angles, editing decisions, costume, makeup, or actors' gestures – to establish that a character or a group of characters is clearly the 'other' – strange, foreign, or menacing type of person who falls outside the 'normal' majority? If so, what are the cues and how do they work? To what extent does applying geographic context to a film support existing inherent biases in the viewer?

Cultural Context Cards

Historical Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>The period in time in which a film was created.</p> <p>The era or cultural movement depicted in the film.</p> <p>The events or notable historical figures depicted in the film.</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the camera help to establish the historical context on screen? Does the camera serve as a view to a historical context?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the editing style reflective of the time within which the film is made?
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are actual historical events or figures represented cinematically (in terms of the look, sound, editing, etc.)? Are they "accurate" or have creative liberties been taken by the filmmakers? Why? Explore how genre conventions are historically relative and dynamic.
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How authentic is the re-creation of time and space through the mise-en-scène? How do you know? Is it more important for the representation to be accurate or for the audience to learn about the event? (eg. Is it more important that people learn who Gandhi is? Or that the people will think that Gandhi looked like Ben Kingsley?)
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the film's story a metaphor for a larger historical event/era? How do the themes and ideas within the film's narrative comment on/relate to the period of time which the film was created? How does the story of the film provide historical context about a specific period of history?
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the film belong to a particular historical film movement (e.g. film noir, the French New Wave, etc.) What is the effect of the historical context on representation made within the film text?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How accurate do you believe the soundscape is in communicating/representing the historical context of the film? Are there any specific sound elements that speak to another time and place in the film?

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the filmmakers discussed any deeper historical meanings in the film? What have critics said about the film's historical context? Can you identify what the historical circumstances that led to the depiction of this even/idea/historical development is? Does the film's historical context serve as a way for us to analyse and/or understand the event depicted? Were there any religious, cultural, political, or economic events happening at the time that could have influenced the filmmaker? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film received upon release? How is the film viewed today? What is the relationship of recent technological change and media production, distribution and circulation? Can you identify the way in which different audience interpretations receive and reflect the historical circumstances relevant of the film? What is the historical context of the film today? Has it changed? Is the focus on the film or the director? Historical contexts can include attitudes. Are there any contexts within the film text that are no longer acceptable or would be challenged today? Are there films we should stop watching because those narratives are no longer helpful to us?

Institutional Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>The production, distribution and exhibition factors involved for a film.</p> <p>The digital or analogue production and distribution factors involved for the film.</p> <p>The budget and control factors involved in a film's production (independent vs. studio based).</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the film shot on analog film or digital video? Were special effects and other film elements created with analog or digital methods (or both)? Does this impact the story and meaning of the film in any way?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the editing of the film indicative of the time when the film was made? Does the film make intertextual reference to institutional contexts that have gone before it? (eg. the Odessa Steps, the Kuleshov technique, Bullet Time etc.)
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are actual institutional contexts represented cinematically (in terms of the look, sound, editing, etc.)? Explore how genre conventions have evolved with the development of specific institutional contexts.
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways have we seen institutional contexts influence the mise-en-scene of a film? (eg. soundstage, filming on location, greenscreen, CGI, product placement).
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there themes and motifs within the film text that indicate trends within film at the time of release?
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the film belong to a particular institutional trend? What kinds of narratives were popular with distributors at the time? How much did this trend influence the narrative conventions of the time? Is the institution of film itself referenced within the text?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it possible to identify institutional contexts in sound? Similar to genre and mise-en-scene, in what ways has sound been influenced by accepted practice in the industry? (eg. composing for film vs. needle-drops, using music that exists as its own media outside of film).

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the creation of this film and innovative new ways of filmmaking? (This can include aspects of production, distribution and exhibition ... from new types of special effects and the use of new editing/lighting/sound techniques to new ways of promoting and releasing the film to the public.) Did the filmmakers or film/media institution have any influence on the nature of the story? How did this impact the final version of the film produced and distributed? Can you identify any institutional characteristics such as rules, regulations, policies, cultural factors and so on that may have impacted the film? (eg. censorship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film received upon release? How is the film viewed today? How was the film released to the public? Did its release format(s) impact the film's performance and reception by audiences and critics? Have institutional regulations changed since the film's release? How does that impact how the text is viewed now?

Cultural Context Cards

Political Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>A film that attempts to persuade, subvert or create a political effect.</p> <p>A film that has caused or incited political events or effects.</p> <p>A film that directly addresses a political issue or concern.</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the camera objective or subjective? Whose POV is the film being viewed through? Is it possible to present an objective view point at all?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the edit communicate the dominant/emerging ideology in the film? What kind of editing is present in the film? Formalist or Classical Hollywood style?
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any evidence that the film could be seen as a form of political propaganda? How? If the film portrays a political movement or event, does it highlight a majority or minority point of view?
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways is the mise-en-scène used to represent dominant/emerging ideologies within the film?
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are political contexts reflected in themes, values, messages and ideologies within the film? Are there political symbols present in the film? If so, what are they and how do they impact the narrative?
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the story support or reject any political viewpoints, groups or perspectives? Do the characters show any specific political views within the film, either through their words or actions? Is this explicit or implied?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has sound been used to represent the political contexts within the film?

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the film seem to have any particular political agenda? Does the film support a widely accepted version of political events or subvert them? Are various political groups represented in different cinematic ways in the film? Does the film comment on any particular laws, policies or political mindsets of the country in which it is set and/or produced? Is this positive or negative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film received upon release? How is the film viewed today? Is the film viewed through the same lens politically today as when it was made?

Cultural Context Cards

Social Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>Communities, identities or issues represented in a film.</p> <p>Social values, conventions and traditions.</p> <p>Communities can include immigrant, religious or language-related groups. Identities can include gender or sexual identification or ways of life.</p> <p>Issues are social dilemmas that evoke opinions and force people to take sides.</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the camera employed to establish character and place within the given social context?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any specific visual cues used to portray certain peoples/places? Are these provoking a positive or negative connotation of the person/place?
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the choice of genre influence how you view certain social contexts, such as people and places? In what ways are the genre conventions used socially relative? Do the choices seek to establish certain people/places/ideas as non-normative? What effect do genre codes and conventions impact representations of social contexts?
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the mise-en-scène enhance/develop/create an idea of the social contexts being represented? Are these representations accurate/reliable?
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the movie seemingly content to reinforce traditional stereotypes of minority characters? Or does it seem to be working against them and how so?
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What narrative role do specific communities, identities or issues play in the film and your sequence? Are there conflicts between characters over social values, conventions and traditions in the film?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it possible to identify social contexts in sound? How has sound played a role in identifying specific social contexts? (eg. wedding music)

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given what you know about the place or time portrayed in the movie, are there groups of people not shown or barely acknowledged in the movie who are nonetheless significant in the geographic location the film is set within? Why do you think they are not portrayed in this movie? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film received upon release? How is the film viewed today? Is there any risk of appropriation with the film's social contexts? Have the social contexts of the film changed much since the time of release? Are these values still held up in the societies within which the film is viewed?

Technological Context

Context(s) within the film text		
Context	Film Elements	Possible Guiding Questions
<p>Tools, products or methods used to create a film.</p> <p>The integration of distribution and exhibition technology of a film.</p> <p>Concerns and factors related to a film's sustainability and/or longevity based on the technology used to create, distribute or execute it.</p>	Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did this available technology (e.g. cameras and techniques available to the director) influence the way the film portrays narrative (eg. black and white vs. colour, deep focus, handheld vs. steadicam)?
	Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is available editing technology reflected in the assembly of the film (e.g. use of flashbacks, expansion vs. elliptical editing, Hollywood and Soviet montage, etc.)? How does technology assist in constructing/distorting time (for example, Bullet Time in <i>The Matrix</i>)?
	Genre, codes & conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has technology established new or innovative genre conventions (e.g. approaches to animation)? How has the technology developed or grown? What are some typical technological contexts that you expect to see within specific genres (e.g. Science Fiction)? In what ways has technology impacted how any extended sequences of action in the film are portrayed?
	Mise-en-scène	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What technology appears within the mise-en-scène of the film? How does that represent culture and time as a context? What technology was used to help create the mise-en-scène? (eg. CGI)
	Motifs, symbols & themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are technology and/or technological contexts used as ideas within the film? (eg. Science Fiction, and how these narratives dream up new ideas in the technological world, that then at times become a real thing in the real world? For example, is <i>Star Trek</i> responsible for the development of bluetooth?).
	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the narrative rely on technology to advance the story? What role does technology play in the lives of the characters?
	Sound (including music)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does sound permeate the narrative and communicate a particular technological era? What effect does this create? How is sound used to represent technology within the film?

Context(s) external to the film	
Time & Place at Release	Time & Place at Viewing
Filmmakers' influences, intentions and vision	Critical response and reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the tools, products and methods used to create the film? How do they contribute to visual storytelling? What are the filmmaker's intentions with these choices? Did the creation of this film innovate new ways of filmmaking? Did this film represent the end of any particular methods of filmmaking? How was this film distributed and exhibited to audiences? (eg. widescreen, IMAX, 3D, analogue, digital) What technological limitations were there on the filmmakers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the film received upon release? To what extent is the film remembered for its contribution to the development or deployment of filmmaking technology? How is the technology depicted in the film viewed today? To what extent has the technology represented in the film stood the test of time? To what extent has the technology used to create the film stood the test of time?