

10 Vocabulary related to films and novels: Plot, Hero, True Story, Bestseller,...



Vocabulary related to films and novels

Everybody loves a good film or a book. They can take you to universes you have never even thought of before, they can make your everyday life that bit more magical and they can also teach you important lessons about life.

Now, films and books have their clear differences but we have found some vocabulary that goes with both of them.

1. Plot

The plot of a film or a book is the storyline and a basic summary of what happens. It's the bit we are all interested in! We all want to know what's happening, who lives, who dies, do those two fall in love?

One thing to be careful of is spoiling the film or book by telling people too much of a plot. Sometimes when film or book reviewers do their reviews they will write spoiler alert to make sure that those who don't want to read a vital part of information, will still be surprised by the plot.

Take a look at the example:

Dylan: Hey, Diana, did you see the new Snow White film?

Diana: Yeah! It was fantastic! I loved at the end where she woke up from eating the poisoned apple. It is a great plot that has survived the test of time!

Dylan: Diana! You could've given me a spoiler alert! Now I know what happens!

Diana: You mean you've never seen the old Snow White films from when we were kids? Everybody knows what happens in Snow White!

Dylan: No! I haven't!

2. Character

A character is someone who appears in the story of a film or book.

We all have our favourite characters from books and films that may sometimes pop into our heads. We feel empathy with them and other emotions, which is very strange as they are not usually real people!

Who is your favourite character?

One of my favourite characters of all time is Walter White from Breaking Bad. What a fantastically emotional guy.

When we watch a film, we can talk about how an actor plays the character. Did they play them well? Would you have chosen somebody else for the role instead?

Then when we read a book we can talk about how the author has written the character. Would you have written them in that way? Did the author think about the character enough?

It's amazing how characters can affect our lives and also the lives of the people that write about them. Authors and directors often talk about how they feel towards a certain character, if they love them or if they hate them for example. These characters become very much a part of our real lives!

Take a look below:

Kate: Wow, I loved that film! Lord of The Rings is great!

Abdul: Yeah me too! I love Legolas' character. I think Orlando Bloom plays him very well.

Kate: Yeah I agree, it's exactly like I imagined him in the books.

3. Hero/heroine and villain

The most important people in a book or movie!

The hero (heroine if they are female) is someone who saves the day with their efforts. They may kill a bad person, slay the dragon or save lots of people from certain peril! If they do good things then they are the heroes.

The stereotypical hero is a knight in shining armour who goes and saves the princess from an evil wizard or a dragon. Nowadays however, lots of writers have taken to writing female heroines in response to an evermore popular feminism movement.

Examples of great heroines include: Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games, Gretel from Hansel and Gretel and Princess Leia from Star Wars.

Then we move onto the villains, also sometimes known as the baddies.

These are the evil people of the piece, the bad people who want to ruin it all for the good people! Some people like the villains better than heroes, believe it or not. I know, it's a bit weird, watch out for these people in your life!

Some examples of great villains include: Darth Vader from Star Wars, Gollum from Lord of The Rings and Voldemort from Harry Potter.

Emma: Wow, I love Star Wars, my favourite character has to be Princess Leia. She is just fantastic! What about you Jack?

Jack: Well, this might sound silly, but my favourite character is Darth Vader.

Emma: What?!

Jack: Yeah, I think he looks really cool and he is not really that bad!

Emma: Okay, now your scaring me! He's the villain! Your favourite character should be the hero or heroine!

4. Protagonist

Another one referring to characters, here we have the protagonist. The protagonist can also be known as the main character and they are the focus of the story.

Some examples of famous protagonists are: Sherlock Holmes, Robin Hood and Harry Potter.

Protagonists can be a range of things depending on what the author wants them to be. Often they are the heroes or heroines of the story but sometimes they can be the main villain!

In films, the most famous actors tend to play protagonists as they are the most important roles. They require so much preparation and for the actor to actually become their character for a limited period of time. They sometimes change their look, their weight and the way they speak.

An example:

Lynne: Dan, what did you think of the new book?

Dan: I loved it. The protagonist was my favourite character because he was so charismatic and charming. I want to be more like him!

Lynne: Interesting! I didn't really like him, he wasn't the hero of the story and actually I think he was the villain.

Dan: Okay, that's your opinion, I never saw it that way.

5. Twist (in the tale)

A good story usually has a good twist.

A twist is something that you don't see coming in a story. This can be either in a film or a book. It can also be known as a plot twist or a twist in the tale.

Think about it, if the story you are reading or the film you are watching is easy to figure out and you can easily guess the ending, then you won't enjoy it because you will have already seen it coming. The quality of a good author or a good writer is to

leave the audience guessing right till the end or lead them down one path and completely change the story at the last moment.

All the best stories have great plot twists right at the end. They are often the most famous moments of them all.

Think about that moment when Darth Vader says “No, I am your father.” Probably the best plot twist of all time (and often misquoted as, “Luke I am your father.”)

Take a look:

Jane: Well, I did not see that coming!

Joe: No, what a great twist! If she hadn’t died then it would’ve been terrible.

Jane: Yeah exactly, who knows how that could’ve ended. What a fantastic plot twist.

Joe: I love a good twist in the tale.

6. Supporting cast

The characters that don’t have their name up in lights but still play an important role in a book or movie.

The supporting cast help to make the movie, without them the hero has no friends, no romance and the villain has no henchmen to help them accomplish their goals.

Some people win awards for their roles as supporting actors and some great actors are just better at being supporting cast members. Some can even steal the show, which means they become more important than the main character.

A great example of this is Heath Ledger as The Joker in The Dark Knight. He completely steals the show with his eccentric portrayal of the evil villain. A well-made film or a great book needs a good supporting cast as well as lead characters. It’s a team effort!

An example:

Yaz: I have to say, I didn’t think the protagonist was very good in that film.

Ben: No, I agree, but I think the supporting cast helped to save the movie. They were very good.

Yaz: Yeah, that’s true! I still enjoyed the film as a whole.

7. Cliffhanger

Controversial moments, these leave us (literally) hanging on for answers.

Imagine it, the end of the film, it’s all coming to the conclusion and then suddenly it ends with no explanation. As humans, we need to be able to explain everything and if we can’t do that we get very angry and frustrated.

Similar to a plot twist, a cliffhanger has to be something that the audience cannot see coming. It leaves them wanting and needing more. Sometimes it allows the writer to extend their series to another book or another film.

One great cliffhanger in British culture is in The Italian Job when the boys are left precariously perched in a bus over a cliff. If they move they will fall to their deaths. The movie ends with the protagonist saying “Hang on a minute lads, I’ve got a great idea.” We don’t know if they survive or if they die and we will never know for sure!

The best cliffhangers leave you saying “What?! Why?! How is this possible?! I need to see the ending!”

Some writers will be really cruel and will not make another book or film.

Tammy: Graham, how was the film?

Graham: Oh my god, it was so good, I loved it but it also annoyed me!

Tammy: Great, but why did it annoy you?

Graham: Well, they ended it all with a cliffhanger and now I have to wait to see if there will be another film.

Tammy: Oh no! I hate cliffhangers!

Graham: Me too, I was not happy.

You’ll just have to wait for the next one!

8. Prequel/Sequel

And the correct name for “the next one” is the sequel.

A sequel is a film or a book that follows on from a previous film or book in order to continue the story. A prequel, on the other hand, is a film or book that unfolds in the time before a film that has already been released.

This happens when a group of films are released in a certain order. The Star Wars saga is a great example to talk about here. They were released in the following order: Episode 1, Episode 2, Episode 3, Episode 4, Episode 5, Episode 6. Yes, very strange indeed! Although it does help to illustrate our point.

Episode 1 is in fact a prequel to Episodes 4, 5 and 6 because it takes place in a time before the films that have already been released, yet it was released after these episodes. This is quite rare in the world of film and literature but still does happen from time to time.

Concentrate more on the role of a sequel which we can see in many modern films and books that stretch across three, four and sometimes five instalments.

Examples of this include: The Hunger Games, Lord of The Rings and Harry Potter.

Jenny: So, Tim, what did you think of the film.

Tim: Well, Jenny, I just can’t wait for the sequel! I need more!

Jenny: Be patient! The sequel isn’t supposed to be released for a couple of years.

Tim: That’s terrible news! They need to make it sooner!

Be patient for your sequels and maybe even prequels!

9. Blockbuster/bestseller

If these words are associated with a book or a film, the chances are they are very popular pieces of work. A blockbuster is a film that sells very well and is extremely popular. A bestseller is the same for books, that quite literally sells better than most books.

It just so happens that a lot of bestsellers are made into blockbusters in the future. They have the great stories and also the fans to make the movie a lot of money. It's difficult to find a film nowadays that hasn't been created from a book. Just how many books are these directors reading?

With books, if it is a bestseller it will often have a big sticker on the front and it will be highly publicised in order to sell even more copies.

Garrett: So, today we are talking about the new blockbuster, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*.

Flynn: We certainly are! I can tell you if the book is anything to go by, then it will be amazing.

Garrett: That was a bestseller right, Flynn?

Flynn: Yeah, it was a hugely popular book! I can't wait for the film!

10. True story

This of course is when a story is based on something that actually happened.

True stories are so appealing to so many different people. If a true story is interesting enough to make it as a movie or a book then it has to be a pretty good story! It makes people believe that things like that could happen in their lives too. That extra connection with the audience makes it all the more special and personal.

Sometimes it is not completely a true story and will be labelled as "based on a true story" but even that is enough for some people.

Hal: Hey Freya, what are you reading?

Freya: Oh, this? It's my new book. It's fantastic and it's a true story.

Hal: Really?

Freya: Yeah, it's brilliant. Although I can't believe this actually happened in real life.

Hal: Well, is it based on a true story or an actual true story?

Freya: It says based on a true story on the front of the book, so maybe it's only partly true!