

Representing History



Why use film?

History is currently 'in vogue' with the media. Documentaries cover the five terrestrial channels, historical non-fiction tops the best selling charts and Simon Schama, Michael Wood and David Starkey are now superstar presenters. Time Team and Restoration positively encourage us to take a 'hands on' approach – we can now affect what happens to our heritage directly.

Historical films are also as popular as ever, with Pirates of the Caribbean currently topping the UK Box Office (although historians may argue exactly which historical period it is from!) and there are still many costume drama classics that draw in audiences across the world.

Films that attempt to show history are sometimes derided by historians and critics for their lack of accuracy and sometimes hilariously bad casting - John Wayne as Genghis Khan anyone?

However, if we view historical films as documents to begin an investigation, and if we look at how the film itself works, as well as examining how it purports to tell us about the past, the result can be a rewarding and enjoyable journey.

A film can capture a feeling for a time; can create a mood and a picture of the past that perhaps, with further historical research and examination of the other contemporary art forms (drama, literature, painting, music etc.) can make that world come to life.

Curriculum Links

The case study films below have been chosen both for their specific links to historical topics but also because of their filmic interest, either as a new take on a particular subject or an innovative way of telling a story.

Film and Media Studies

This pack should be of use to students and teachers looking at the Key Concepts at GCSE, A Level and GNVQ Media Studies.

Examinations of how Elizabeth and Tombstone were marketed to different audiences (as historical films, as action movies, use of stars in advertising, production of trailers etc.) would also be useful for the study of audiences and institutions.

With reference to Culloden, there are many areas to examine (as news, as a documentary, as a 'political' film), and particularly within the other work of writer director, Peter Watkins.

Genre studies is a particularly relevant area with reference to the case study films below including the historical film, the biopic, the documentary and the western.

The films have particular relevance to the WJEC Film Studies AS/A2 course – Elizabeth is a close study film in AS Module FS3: messages and values-British and Irish Cinema; Tombstone can be examined in the context of genre and the revisionist western, and Culloden is an example of how documentary can be used in different ways to show 'truth'.

History

The case study titles should be of interest for study in the following topic areas:

GCSE

WJEC – Spec A, Exam Topics (Paper 1): Elizabethan Age 1558-1603

WJEC – Spec B In Depth Study (Paper 1): American West 1865-1895

OCR – Schools History Project, Studies In Depth: Elizabethan England, American West 1840-1895

AQA –American West 1840-1895, Elizabethan England 1558-1603

AS/A2

OCR – AS: Mid Tudor Crisis 1540-1558

AQA –AS Module 2 British History: Early Georgian Britain 1714-1748, Module 3 British History: Aspects of British History 1714-1802,

A2 Module 5 British History: Reformation, Reaction and the Age of Elizabeth 1525-1603

This is not an exhaustive list of connections – teachers of the above subjects and indeed others may also find links to their coursework.

Filming History

Since the earliest days of cinema, filmmakers have looked to the past as well as the present to produce stories of the screen.

Biblical epics, Westerns, biographies of great figures, war movies, newsreel, costume dramas, adaptations of classic novels and plays and swashbucklers all portray our past, and present history from a number of different perspectives. Or rather, the films RE-present history. What we are seeing did not actually happen, but is a version of what happened, given to us via researchers, a script, a director, actors, special effects and editors.

This is not just how film represents history. Plays, paintings, novels, and television documentaries all give us versions of history. Even historians give us a number of views of history, as they are writing in different times, in different environments and with different political and cultural experiences. Winston Churchill's history of the British people, for example, will differ from Simon Schama's.



As with other art forms, film should not be seen as showing the whole truth or what really happened. In fact, films that claim to be 'based on a true story' should perhaps be approached with more suspicion than any fictionalised narrative!

What film CAN do with regards to history is help bring it to life, inspire lively debates, arguments and discussions around a range of topics and send students off into new directions of research and study.

History is not just about our past, it is about our present – history is happening now, and cinema is perhaps the most vivid way to start a journey into a particular age or historical life.

Two recent examples of how film can bring twentieth century history to life are *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Australia 2001, Dir. Philip Noyce, Cert PG) and *Goodbye Lenin!* (Germany 2002, Dir. Wolfgang Becker, Cert 15).

Rabbit Proof Fence shows us an aspect of Australian history – the white administration taking mixed race Aboriginal children from their mothers and putting them into camps during the 1950s – that is probably totally alien to British audiences, and gives a new perspective on a country normally gained from soap operas, lager adverts and holiday programmes.

Goodbye Lenin! takes a world-shattering event familiar to us all – the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – but looks at it from a fresh and funny perspective, that of an East German family, and the lengths they will go to convince their die-hard communist mother that the city is still divided.

NOTE: both of the above films are available to screen – contact your local independent cinema for details.



Rabbit-Proof Fence



Goodbye Lenin!

When using film to examine and discuss history and historical events, it is useful to look at the following areas in detail:

- The film as 'history' - what is the event, how is it portrayed, how 'accurate' is it, what source is it based on, from whose point of view is it from?
- The film as 'film' – what form is used (e.g. documentary, fictional narrative), what techniques are used to tell the story, how is film language used (i.e. editing, framing, costume, cast, music and sound)?
- The film in context – when was it made, who is it made for, how was it marketed, what was the social and cultural background to its creation and how did that affect the film?

This approach is helpful to both historians and film academics as not only is the film examined as a method of showing a historical event or figure, but the text itself becomes an area of historical study, a piece of social and cultural history.

Case Studies

Each film will be analysed below covering the following areas:

- a brief historical background to the events portrayed
- how the film represents that history and the filmic techniques used to explore themes and story
- the films own historical context

Elizabeth (UK 1998)

Director: Shekhar Kapur

Screenplay: Michael Hirst

Music: David Hirschfelder (includes Nimrod (Edward Elgar) and Requiem (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart))



Cate Blanchett.....Elizabeth
Geoffrey Rush.....Sir Francis Walsingham
Joseph Fiennes.....Robert Dudley
Christopher Eccleston.....The Duke of Norfolk
Richard Attenborough..... Sir William Cecil
James Frain.....Alvaro de la Quadra
Kathy Burke.....Mary Tudor
Vincent Cassel.....Duc d'Anjou
Fanny Ardant.....Mary of Guise
Jamie Forman.....Earl of Sussex
Edward Hardwicke.....Earl of Arundel
Eric Cantona..... Monsieur de Foix
Kelly Macdonald..... Isabel Knollys
John Guilgud.....The Pope

Available to buy on VHS and DVD (Polygram, Cert 15).

DVD extras – interviews with cast and crew; behind the scenes footage; The Making of Elizabeth featurette.

The History

Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. When she was three years old, her mother was executed for treasonous adultery and in effect she grew up with four stepmothers.

According to the credits at the beginning and the end of the film, Elizabeth covers a specific period of time. The opening credits start the film in 1554, and the final credits state that 'Elizabeth reigned for a further forty years', placing the final sequence in 1563 (she died in 1603).

Although the film shows a number of specific events within that time (e.g. the death of Mary, Elizabeth's coronation) a number of other events take place outside that time line. The Papal Bull arrived in England in 1570, the Duke of Anjou appeared at Court in 1571 and the Duke of Norfolk was executed in 1572.

The film in effect telescopes a historical period, placing crucial events within a narrative that allows us to follow Elizabeth down a specific path, from Princess to Gloriana, the Virgin Queen.

The Film

As the title insinuates, the film is centered on Elizabeth, the woman and the Queen. We follow the story from her point of view and are witness to her change in attitude and appearance as the film progresses.

The film gives a vivid sense of the feeling of the time, with the horror of the Protestant executions, the political machinations, the struggle for power, the colour and noise of the Elizabethan court and the threat of treachery towards the young Queen.

The main theme of the film is conflict. Conflict between Catholics and Protestants, between Mary and Elizabeth, between the Queen and her bishops, between love and duty. There is also a feeling of unease and danger that permeates the film, the sense that death is ever present.

This dark and threatening feeling is put across in a number of ways. The horrific death of the martyrs in the opening sequence are shot from a high angle with the audience looking down on the victims as they burn, a God's eye view of the event. The Duke of Norfolk, shaven headed, dressed in black (as all good cinema villains are!) is shown as a sexual and political predator.

The attempt by the monk, John Ballard, to kill Elizabeth is shot in the style of a horror film. He moves in slow motion, through the shadowy halls, his face covered by a cloak and mysteriously vanishes when Elizabeth speaks.

However, it is Elizabeth that carries the film. We first see her in the light, slowly dancing and smiling, free from affairs of state and responsibility. As the film develops, we see her taking on more and more responsibility, shown in the change of her dress, make-up, hairstyle and bearing.

As she prepares to meet her bishops to discuss creating one Church of England, we see her preparing her speech as if she were an actress practising lines for a play, with short direct-to-camera pieces, edited together, almost looking like a video showreel.

However, once she appears in front of the Bishops (the audience), she gains confidence and is shown gently berating her court with charm and wit.

In the film's final sequence, we see her hair being shorn (linking her to the martyrs at the beginning of the film), with her sacrifice being love and marriage. 'See, I have become a virgin. I am married to England.'

The Context

Released in 1998, *Elizabeth* is the latest in a long line of cinematic portraits of the monarch. Starting with Sarah Bernhardt's delirious portrait *Queen Elizabeth* (1912), in which Elizabeth dies in a swoon after hearing of the death of Essex, there have been a number of films featuring Elizabeth. Bette Davis starred in two of the most famous 'older Elizabeth' films, *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), co-starring Errol Flynn playing the Earl of Essex as a vain and spoilt brat, and *The Virgin Queen* (1955), where she romances Sir Walter Raleigh (Richard Todd).

Flora Robson also played the Queen twice, in *Fire Over England* (1936) and in *The Sea Hawk* (USA 1940), both set against the attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Young Bess (UK 1953) is interesting as it portrays the Queen (Jean Simmons) as a teenager, and explores her relationship with an older man, Thomas Seymour (Stewart Granger) – in reality; she was only fourteen when he tried to seduce her.

Elizabeth can also be seen in comparison to another film from the same year, *Shakespeare in Love* (USA 1998) released in the UK in January 1999, three months after *Elizabeth*.

Both portray a very different Elizabethan England – *Shakespeare in Love* is the 'Merrie England' of myth; bawdy, theatrical, shot in bright colours and sunlight, with a wise and knowing Queen (the time is not specified in the film, but Christopher Marlow was killed in 1593, making Elizabeth sixty years old). The films are also linked by two actors, Joseph Fiennes (who plays Shakespeare), repeating a romantic hero role, and Geoffrey Rush.

Elizabeth did well at the UK Box Office, taking around £4.5 million, and gaining a number of awards including Best Oscar for make-up and BAFTA's for Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush and again, best make-up.

It also added to the growing number of recent books and television documentaries around Elizabeth and the Tudor Court, most notably David Starkey's *Henry VIII* (1998) and *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (2000).

The film proved to be Cate Blanchett's international breakthrough, winning eleven major awards for her role, including a BAFTA and a Golden Globe, and being nominated for an Oscar. She is now a major 'name', subsequently starring in *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *The Gift*, *Veronica Guerin* and *The Lord of The Rings* Trilogy.

In the UK, the film was sold as a political thriller as well as a costume drama. The trailer used dramatic choral and orchestral music, fast editing and close-ups to show the darkness closing in on Elizabeth and the posters emphasised the individuals in the story with a no-nonsense one word description for each; Elizabeth = HERETIC, Norfolk = TRAITOR, Walsingham = ASSASSIN, Robert Dudley = LOVER.

The American poster used a full colour shot of the young Elizabeth, draped over a chair, showing her as a sexual and confident woman.

Elizabeth can also be studied with reference to two other British 'monarch movies' released during the 1990s, *The Madness of George III* (1995) and *Mrs Brown* (1997). Problems relevant to the current Royal Family (relationships with the media, love versus duty, obsession with celebrity, relations between the state and the Church) are all present in the films and it would be interesting to examine them in detail.

Tombstone (USA 1993)

Director: George Cosmatos

Screenplay: Kevin Jarre

Music: Bruce Broughton

Kurt Russell..... Wyatt Earp
Bill Paxton..... Morgan Earp
Sam Elliott..... Virgil Earp
Val Kilmer..... Doc Holliday
Powers Boothe..... Curly Bill Brocius
Michael Biehn..... Jonny Ringo
Jon Tenney..... Sheriff John Behan
Dana Delany..... Josephine Marcus
Billy Zane..... Fabien
Stephen Lang..... Ike Clanton
Dana Wheeler-Nicholson..... Mattie Blaylock Earp
Jason Priestley..... Deputy Billy Breckenridge
Joanna Pacula..... Kate Fisher
Michael Rooker..... McMasters
Charlton Heston..... Henry Hooker
Harry Carey Junior..... Marshall Fred White
Billy Bob Thornton..... Jonny Tyler
Robert Mitchum..... Narrator



Available to buy on VHS and DVD (Entertainment on Video, Cert 15).

DVD extras – The Making off Tombstone featurette (5 mins)

The History

Tombstone was a small town in Arizona which grew up around a silver strike in the surrounding mountains in 1877. It was named after prospector Ed Schieffelin who was told that all he would find there would be his own tombstone. Virgil Earp had been made Deputy Marshall of the southern Arizona Territory and in 1880; the three Earp brothers joined him there. The youngest, James Earp, is not mentioned in the film Tombstone.

Violence in the town came from the conflict between the ranchers and the business leaders, traditional rural workers against what they saw as Yankee modernists with modern city ways.

The ranchers were labelled 'cowboys' by the local paper, the Tombstone Epitaph and it is against this background that the story of the film takes place.

Jonny Ringo and Curly Bill, the villains of the film, were actual outlaws, Curly Bill having a method of shooting a gun named after him (the Curly Bill spin), which is used in the film for the death of the Marshall, Fred White

John 'Doc' Holliday was actually a qualified dentist, who contracted severe tuberculosis in his twenties and had already killed at least nine men before he arrived at Tombstone in 1880. He died in a Colorado sanatorium in 1887.

Wyatt died in 1929 in Los Angeles and Virgil in 1906. Josephine Marcus carried on the myth of her husband, overseeing a white-washed biography, Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshall in 1931 and writing her own story, I Married Wyatt Earp. She died in 1944, but is immortalised in a TV movie version of her book, where she was played by...Marie Osmond.

The Film

Tombstone opens with a fascinating sequence which immediately shows how film can purport to show an audience 'authentic' history and how complicated the reading of that text can be.

Over flickering black and white images of cowboys firing guns, accompanied by rollicking barroom piano and a narration (gravely spoken by Robert Mitchum), we see and hear a depiction of the West. The growth of Tombstone, the arrival in 1879 of Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp (whom we see in front of the camera) and the creation of the outlaw band, known as the cowboys, one of whom fires a gun directly into the camera.

Although the sequence seems to be fact (it looks 'real') what we are seeing is a carefully created fiction. Cinema itself was not invented until 1895 and so could not show life in 1879. The images are a mixture of newsreel footage from the early days of the twentieth century, clips from old western films and newly shot 'old' footage of Val Kilmer and Kurt Russell dressed as their characters.

The final shot of a cowboy firing a gun directly into the camera is from Edwin S Porter's classic western *The Great Train Robbery* (USA 1903) usually spoken of as cinema's first narrative film.

So that opening sequence, which is just over a minute of screen time, combines the history and myth of the actual West (Earp is already described as 'legendary') with the history of the western and of cinema itself.

The film then follows a traditional narrative, covering the key historical events with some accuracy. The dominating theme seems to be the acceptance of death and destiny, for the outlaws, for the

Earp Brothers and for Doc Holliday, with the repeated use of Biblical imagery and quotes emphasising this. A massacre at a Mexican wedding takes place outside a church and a priest is shot, leading Jonny Ringo to quote from Revelations:

'Behold a pale horse and the man who sat on him was death...and hell followed with him.'

There is then a cut to the arrival of a train (not a pale horse but an Iron Horse, an Indian term but also the name of a classic silent western from 1924 by John Ford) and the Earps get off.

The idea of the brothers bringing 'Hell' is repeated in Wyatt's outcry after the death of Morgan, used in the film's trailer:

'The Law is coming...I'm coming and Hell's coming with me!'

The tagline 'Justice is coming' was also used on the poster with an image of the three brothers and Doc Holliday dressed in black walking towards the shoot-out at the OK Corral, a visual reference to the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse.

The key event linked to the myth of Wyatt Earp, the gunfight at the OK Corral, does not form a central part of the film, which mainly concentrates on the relationship between Wyatt and his brothers and between the brothers and Doc Holliday, portrayed as a learned Southern dandy, constantly facing death.

The film mixes traditional western images (riders in silhouette against the sunset, shoot-outs in river beds, 'womenfolk' running for shelter from drunken desperados shooting up the town) with new takes on some clichés, particularly the idea of the duel.

A good example is the face-off between Doc and Jonny Ringo in the saloon, where the two men fire dialogue at each other in Latin, then after Ringo does spinning tricks with his gun, Doc follows with similar skills but with his small silver drinking cup. The sequence undermines our expectations of what we know cowboys do in westerns when facing each other in a duel.

The Context

Tombstone is part of a series of films examining the legend of Wyatt Earp and more specifically, the gunfight at the OK Corral, which has now passed into modern folklore.

The story has survived a number of traditional cinematic re-tellings from *Frontier Marshal* (1939) with Randolph Scott and Cesar Romero and *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957), with Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas, and has even moved into the realms of science fiction with the classic *Star Trek* episode, *Spectre of the Gun* when Kirk and his crew find themselves in the place of the Clantons at the OK Corral.

Tombstone can be seen as part of the 'modern western' genre, beginning with Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (USA 1969) and running through to the present day. Key elements of these westerns were graphic and realistic violence, a reversal of the traditional Western codes (clean cut heroes, frightened womenfolk, a pre-twentieth century setting) and the portrayal of western legends as flawed anti-heroes, such as Billy the Kid in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), Jesse James in *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (1971) and General Custer in *Little Big Man* (1970).

More recent westerns have re-examined the role of the American Indians (*Dances With Wolves*, 1990) and women (*The Ballad of Little Jo*, 1993) and even the western film itself, Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992).

In terms of the Earp story, the most famous is probably John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946) starring Henry Fonda as Wyatt and Victor Mature as Doc Holliday. Ford's film is an example of how the facts become legend – all the brothers are good, Wyatt meets and romances the totally fictitious Clementine Carter and Tombstone is tamed by the law not by the gun, signified with a beautiful sequence when Wyatt dances with Clementine (newly arrived from New York) against the half-built timber church – the civilised east meets the savage west, framed in one shot.

Doc (1971) as the title suggests, told the tale from Doc Holliday's point of view, with Stacy Keach playing the role as a romantic, bloodthirsty loser. Released during the Vietnam War, the film can be seen as an anti-war statement, the difference between good and evil blurred (the Earp brothers are opportunist schemers who gun down the Clantons by using shotguns). Screenwriter Pete Hamill commented that 'Indochina was Dodge City and the Americans were some collective versions of Wyatt Earp'.

Six months after *Tombstone* was released, came another epic version of the story, *Wyatt Earp*, directed by Lawrence Kasdan with Kevin Costner in the title role and Dennis Quaid as Doc Holliday.

Over three hours long, the film concentrates on getting the facts of Wyatt's life straight and adds a lot more material before and after the *Tombstone* era. Following on from Costner's success with *Dances With Wolves*, this time the film was a critical and commercial failure and seems to be the final word on the cinematic life of Wyatt Earp.

Culloden (UK 1964)

Written and directed by Peter Watkins

Photography: Dick Bush

Music: 'My Bonnie Moorhen' sung by Colin Carter

Historical adviser: John Prebble

Cast: The men, women and children of Inverness

Available to buy on VHS and DVD (BFI, Cert 15)

Extras:

VHS - Watkins's early amateur film *Forgotten Faces* and colour footage from *Culloden*

DVD – as above plus commentary by historian Dr John Cook

The History

Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) was born in Rome in 1720, the son of the so-called 'Old Pretender' James Edward Stuart, claimant to the English and Scottish thrones by way of his father, James II. The Catholic James was exiled in 1688 leaving the way open for the Protestant William of Orange to claim the throne.

By July 1745, and with the Hanoverian George II as King, Charles Edward landed in Scotland determined to claim back the throne for the Stuarts. He managed to mobilise an army and marched into England, reaching as far as Derby by Christmas. Due to a number of reasons, one of which being that the French failed to appear as back-up troops, Charles decided to turn back to Scotland with London only 130 miles away.

He next faced the English forces in April 1746, just south of Inverness, on the field of Culloden Moor, a battle which proved to be the last fought on British soil.

The Film

Produced for BBC Television in 1964, *Culloden* examines the battle and its bloody aftermath with a mixture of filmic styles and forms. Watkins' technique was to show the battle as a contemporary news report, using elements that go into producing a 'real life' account. An unemotional voice-over narration giving facts ('This is roundshot. This is what it does.') a hand-held camera giving a cinema verite feel to the piece; the use of mostly non-actors in key roles and the idea of Scottish soldiers speaking Gaelic add to the authenticity.

Compared to recent Hollywood versions of Scottish history such as *Braveheart* (1995) and *Rob Roy* (1995) the film seems to be more realistic and authentic, even though the form is 'unrealistic' – that is, even though the characters speak directly to the camera and there is an interviewer on the battlefield discussing the battle with the Duke of Cumberland and Bonnie Prince Charlie, there is a sense of realism that comes across, primarily because of the filmic techniques used. We believe what we see and hear in documentary film and news reporting more than we believe a fictional narrative, even when it is based on a true event.

The film does not give us a straightforward England bad/ Scotland good perspective but shows us the battle through the eyes of the ordinary soldiers, both on the English and Scottish sides, and it is with them that the audience are asked to empathise with. For example, comparisons are made between the Duke of Cumberland (the son of King George) who is worth £15,000 a year, to a dragoon, who earns sixpence a day.

The camera constantly shows the dirty and blood covered faces of the foot soldiers in close-up, so they fill the screen, whereas the commanding offices of the forces (particularly Cumberland and Charles) are mainly seen in either medium or long shot, bewigged and clean, distanced and remote from the audiences gaze and from battle itself.

This is particularly powerful near the beginning of the film, when the camera pans across the Scottish troops and a young child of no more than ten, slowly turns and gazes directly into the lens, bringing home the loss of innocence and destruction caused by the conflict.

It is the generals on both sides, and also the clan leaders, who are shown to be responsible for the massacre. We see the Scots arguing about where to stand on the battlefield and learn that Charles had no fighting experience whatsoever, apart from being in a siege for thirteen days when he was boy.

The Context

The Jacobite Rebellion on film has tended to concentrate on the Scottish point of view, with Culloden seen as a gloriously romantic defeat.

Alexander Korda's *Bonnie Prince Charlie* (1948), starring David Niven, was little more than a box of shortbread come to life, with the legendary leader indulging in heroics and romancing a vacuous Flora McDonald.

Robert Louis Stephenson's classic *The Master of Ballentrae*, with the rebellion as a backdrop to the story of two brothers, has been filmed a number of times, most notably with an ageing Errol Flynn in 1952. One fictional film that at least attempts to get the history right is *Chasing the Deer* (1994), a drama about a family torn apart by the war, produced in Scotland and starring Ian Cuthbertson and Brian Blessed.

Culloden was broadcast by the BBC at a time when America was beginning its assault in Vietnam and the UK anti-nuclear campaign was gaining public attention, and makes a powerful statement on war, the effect war has on ordinary people and how government-sponsored genocide is not just the province of twentieth century leaders.

In the film's final sequence where we are told of the destruction of the clan and the way of life of the Highlanders, it is comparable with the 'ethnic cleansing' seen in recent conflicts around the world.

From a political point of view, the film is scathing about the leaders of both armies. The Scots are led by elderly, incapable idiots, with Bonnie Prince Charlie portrayed as a nervous fop who runs out on his army and leaves his followers to face the brutality of the English regime. Watkins not only shows the battle, but reminds us about the aftermath, the so-called Pacification of the Highlands, with thousands of men, women and children murdered by orders of the British government and the British king.

There are many similarities in *Culloden* with Watkins' other BBC film, *The War Game* (1965) that shows the possible consequences of a nuclear strike on south east England. Both are reconstructed documentaries, both use non actors, both use a 'matter of fact' voice-over narration, complementing the scenes of horror and violence, and both show the devastating effect that political warfare has on ordinary people's lives.

Culloden shows how film can be used to give life to a historical event, giving it relevance to the politics and people of today.

The film's final statement, referring to the battle and the clearances that followed, that the government 'created a desert, and called it peace', could be just as easily be applied to Iraq or Israel today as it was to Scotland 260 years ago.

General Further Reading

The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event – Vivian Sobchak (Routledge, London 1996)

Fascinating study of modern history as seen through the media's eyes and ears including chapters on the Holocaust, Oliver Stone's JFK and the Rodney King case.

Hollywood History of the World – George Macdonald Fraser (Harvill Press, London 1996)

Good detail when comparing historical events with their film counterparts.

Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies – Marc Carne (Cassell, London 1996)

An excellent and sometimes extremely funny account of over 60 historical films by historians, comparing the film to the real thing, moving chronologically from Jurassic Park (T Rex was actually from the Cretaceous period fact fans) to All The Presidents Men.

Elizabeth

British Historical Cinema – Clare Monk and Amy Sargeant (Routledge, London 2002)

Very useful book to dip into and which covers a wealth of material, examining areas such as Zulu, British war movies, the Carry On... historical parodies and the Royal biopic.

British Cinema of the 90s – Robert Murphy (BFI, London 2000)

A series of articles covering a range of aspects of British Cinema, including a chapter on changes in the heritage film.

England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy (Oxford University Press 2002)

A wonderful examination of how Elizabeth has been portrayed by historians, artists, writers and filmmakers over the centuries. There is a very good section on film and television versions of her life.

Tombstone

Back in the Saddle Again: New essays on the Western (BFI, London 1998)

Excellent new studies on the portrayal of the West on film and TV, with a fascinating section on how the image of General Custer has changed from hero to villain in less than a hundred years.

Culloden

Culloden – John Prebble (1961)

The novel from which Peter Watkins based his film. Prebble also served as historical advisor on the film.

Useful Websites

For all film information, the Internet Movie Database is perhaps the most useful for production information, articles and reviews, message boards and access to related sites.

www.imdb.com

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