

Citizen kane – personal response



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Citizen Kane is an American drama film released in 1941. It follows the life of the main character, Charles Foster Kane, and the investigation into “rosebud” – the last word spoken before his death. Kane was a wealthy newspaper tycoon who lived a reserved lifestyle; he had many possessions but isolated himself from the public eye wherever possible towards the end of his life. The director’s portrayal of the film’s main themes are shown in such a way that a Year 12 group of students would be able to understand, and therefore can easily make links with society and even their own lives.

I would highly recommend Citizen Kane for a Year 12 book club. I will be talking about 2 main points shown in Citizen Kane that I believe are good discussion points for an English class, and which are relevant to our world today. It is an interesting point to note that although the film was released in 1941, many of the ideas can be translated into the present day. First I will talk about the idea of “ Loss” in the film, and then I will discuss Materialism and how a group of year 12 students can relate to, and learn from this theme.

Loss is a complex idea in the film, as it is not an immediately obvious theme. Defining what “ Loss” is in the film is an interesting thought to discuss. The movie uses flashbacks to tell the story of Charles Kane’s life, this technique is used by the director to show a retrospective view on his life and to emphasise his losses. One of the first flashbacks show him as a child, when he was innocent and happy. In the picture on the screen, what you can see is his Mother handing over custody to Thatcher, who is going to take him to New York to be educated and given a successful life.

In the background you can see Kane outside in the snow, he is representing innocence, but the fact that he is framed by the window hints that he is going to become trapped in his new guardianship. This loss continues throughout the film, he loses his wife, his newspaper company, and his election campaign for governor before eventually losing his life. The film ends with him alone, just like he was at the start of the film. But instead of being happy in the white snow, he is alone in a dark mansion.

This is a theme that I think is one that could be discussed in depth by a year 12 book club. Another theme portrayed in Citizen Kane is the idea of materialism, and I believe this is a theme that Year 12 Students would be able to understand and form opinions upon. In the film, Charles Kane lives in a huge mansion filled with many expensive goods. He was an avid statue collector, a hobby only the very wealthy could pursue. Charles Kane said in the film, " They've been making statues for some two thousand years, and I've only been collecting for five. The director's uses of depth of focus to exaggerate Kane's many possessions, and in one shot near the end we can see rooms full of crates with items he never unpacked. In his mansion, the rooms are perceived to be large, with dark shadows cast all around. Perhaps this is a metaphor to suggest that Kane's excessive amount of materialistic possessions have now begun to own him. This leads to a link a Year 12 group of students will be able to make with the modern world today. Advancement of technology has skyrocketed in the past few decades.

The invention of smart phones, tablets and other household technologies have created a culture in which it is deemed necessary to own as many of these items as possible. It would seem that Social status is moving from

humanitarian values to being based on your materialistic demeanor. Year 12s will be able to relate to the concept that the distinction between ' need' and ' want' is being clouded by the desire to have these products in order to be ' accepted' into modern society.

Much like Charles Kane's obsession with collecting statues, people in society today are becoming obsessed with purchasing the newer, updated version of a product they may already own one, or several of. The film represents his collecting as an obsession, whereas it is deemed normal in today's world, and this is a point that is open for discussion. Citizen Kane's representation of materialism provides an excellent starting point for Year 12s to discuss, it is easily relatable and can spark many views and opinions, therefore making it suitable to belong on a class viewing list.

Citizen Kane is a film which presents a wide range of themes, and it is these themes which can teach us many things about the lives we live and the world which we live in. The concepts of materialism and loss are ones that are relevant and suitable for a group of Year 12 English students. The imagery and metaphors shown in the film represent issues that can be directly translated into today's social climate. Therefore I would thoroughly recommend Citizen Kane to a Year 12 book club.