



# Diversity and Practice: The Educational Function of Film for Secondary School Students and Its Modes of Engagement

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**Abstract.** Film is a very popular and enjoyable form of artistic expression for secondary school students. Also, film art is an important carrier for aesthetic education, moral education, ideological education, emotional education and mental health education for secondary school students. Secondary school students are exposed to films by means of cinema viewing, online or downloadable viewing on the Internet, and classroom viewing. This study analyzes the main ways in which secondary school students are exposed to films, and then explores the modes of film participation in education.

**Keywords:** Secondary school student · Films · Education · Moral education · Approach

## 1 Introduction

Film refers to a processing of continuous picture developed by combining moving pictures and slide projection, is a modern art of sight and sound, and is also a synthesis of modern technology and art that can accommodate tragedy and literary drama, photography, painting, music, dance, writing, sculpture, architecture and many other arts [1].

Excellent cinematographic works can enlighten people, influence their thinking, bring them aesthetic pleasure and psychological harmony, cultivate their emotions and perfect their personalities. Diverse film plots and the technology of lighting appeal to the energetic youth. Especially, for the growth of secondary school students, films have become an important medium for influencing their physical and mental development [2].

The education of secondary school students is a preparatory stage after primary education. Students at the secondary level of study are developing rapidly physically and mentally and are at a critical stage in the initial formation of their worldview, outlook on life and values. The education of students at the secondary level also plays a crucial role in the building of material and spiritual civilization. Education at the secondary level focuses on the development of students' personalities and strengths, helps them develop a sense of responsibility in practice and establish the concept of harmonious and

all-round development of mind, body and soul, and is dedicated to cultivating modern secondary school students with a sound personality and all-round development. Based on this, the educational functions of films for secondary school students and the modes of film participating in secondary school students' education are explored and analyzed.

## 2 The Educational Function of Films for Secondary School Students

With the rapid development, films get rid of the stale and bring forth the fresh. And the diversified film works have become effective means, methods and approaches to educate secondary school students. At the same time, the popularity of films has brought a new opportunity and platform to middle school education [3]. Secondary school students who are still developing physically and mentally need to improve their personalities and establish their worldviews, outlooks on life and values during their secondary school life so that they can develop physically and mentally in a harmonious manner. And films can influence the growth of secondary school students in a subtle way, which is the educational appeal of films.

At once, the educational function of films for secondary school students is often limited to aesthetic education, or it is used as an auxiliary tool in classroom teaching, and the moral and ideological education, emotional education and psychological health education functions of films are too mechanical, failing to fully display the educational function of films.

### 2.1 The Aesthetic Education Function of Films for Secondary School Students

Aesthetic education in art is a process of moving from awareness to action through appreciation of art, which leads to inspiration and then to practice. Films have a sensory impact on secondary school students through a series of images and sounds such as pictures, light, colours and shapes, bodies and sounds, while films provoke secondary school students to think about beauty through the beauty of details, suspense, mood, tragedy, comedy and structure of film narratives. Through the language of art, films inculcate and infect secondary school students, subconsciously influencing their aesthetics.

Taking "Big Fish & Begonia" as an example, the story is about Tsubaki, a fairy who is in charge of the growth of begonias, who tries her best to revive the soul of a human boy "Kun" to repay the favour and struggles against fate with the help of the sky god "Qiu". The beautiful images in the film, the mysterious space designed after the "Fujian Tulou" and the colour palette of dark red, dark blue and robe red in the animated film make secondary school students moved with the colour and narrative content, while with the use of panorama technique, which has a very realistic effect, the film performs a sense of perspective and wide-angle tension, allowing secondary school students to experience beauty. The film "Shadow" depicts the story of a small man who has been imprisoned since childhood and unwilling to be turned into a puppet, goes through trials and tribulations to relentlessly find his freedom. The control of colour and the presentation of black and white images in the film create the mood of a traditional Chinese wash painting. By watching the film, secondary school students can realize that

colours can show ‘beauty’ and that a single hue can also show different ‘beauties’, which can make them think about beauty and appreciate ‘beauty’.

## **2.2 The Moral and Ideological and Political Education Functions of Films for Secondary School Students**

Moral and ideological and political education for secondary school students is a vital part of national education. Traditional moral indoctrination no longer meets the needs of secondary school students’ physical and mental development. Combining theory with practice, films imperceptibly carry on moral education and ideological and political education for secondary school students in the mode of “moistening things silently”. In December 2018, the Ministry of Education and the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China jointly issued the “Guidance on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools”. The “Guidance” states that the important role of excellent films in promoting the all-round development of primary and secondary school students’ moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic development should be given full play. The importance of films to the moral and ideological and political education of secondary school students was emphasized. Films, as a means of moral and ideological and political education for secondary school students, are loved by the majority of secondary school students for their rich contents and innovation in form.

Excellent films that inspire people to strive for advancement, such as “Tunnel War”, “Landmine Warfare” and “Steel Meets Fire”, have accompanied the growth of generations of secondary school students. The film “Golden Bowknot” tells the story of ordinary astronaut families and their offsprings’ growth and eulogizes the dedication and devotion of Chinese astronauts. The film “Net” is close to life and is set in the online world in which young people live, helping them to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Internet and improve their own online moral literacy. The film “Yang Shanzhou” portrays a leading cadre who always puts the interests of the people before his personal interests. Through vivid characters and touching deed, the film shows the truth, goodness and beauty of human nature through the unique artistic expression of films, sets an example for secondary school students to learn from, subconsciously educates secondary school students on morality and ideology, and provokes secondary school students to reflect, which in turn leads to inspiration and practical action.

## **2.3 The Emotional Education Function of Films for Secondary School Students**

Emotion is a fundamental component of mental activity, and any form of artistic expression can stimulate emotional changes within a person. The artistic expression of film attaches great importance to the emotional uplift and depression of the stuff. Through the changing of lights, the richness of the characters and the plots, the films allow the secondary school students to become involved and to experience the “emotional transmission”. The secondary school students are infected by the characters and the plot of the film, can experience the emotions in the film, sublimate their own psychological and emotional experience, and then think about their own emotional perceptions.

The film “Forrest Gump” depicts the story of “Forrest Gump”, a boy with a congenital disability who “runs all the way” through his tireless efforts to become a football star, a war hero and a billionaire. By means of watching the film, secondary school students can relate to their own lives, feel the difficulties of “Forrest Gump”, experience the struggles of “Gump” growing up, and reflect on the dedication behind “Gump’s” success. The film “The Mirror”, which depicts three different families in trouble and the children drop out of school, reflects the problems of the children’s family growth pattern. The film uses intergenerational issues in real life as an entry point for secondary school students to reflect on their own upbringing, think about their own problems in growing up, and find solutions to promote their own harmonious growth.

#### **2.4 The Psychological Health Education Function of Films for Secondary School Students**

Living in a multicultural and information-based world today, secondary school students face many problems such as interpersonal interaction, academics and growth, and those who are still developing physically and mentally are prone to mental health problems and psychological disorders such as low self-esteem, autism, loneliness, depression and difficulties in interaction. The problems of secondary school students such as poisoning, suicide and robbery have also attracted the attention of the community. Films, as a form of artistic expression, can help secondary school students develop physically and mentally in a harmonious manner by subliminally de-escalating and channeling their negative psychological stress through drama.

In the film “Rain Man”, Charlie discovers that his father has left a huge inheritance to his autistic brother Raymond, and Charlie does whatever he can to cheat him out of the money, but affection replaces alienation and brotherly love replaces Charlie’s selfishness. The film is not deliberately melodramatic, allowing secondary school audiences to feel the mood and relate to themselves through the film, which can diffuse the problems of interpersonal and intergenerational relationships in real life. The film “Matchmaker” depicts the story of Roy and Frank, two men who make a living by conning. The story may seem absurd. But in the film, Roy suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobia of squares, and the process of seeking counseling again and again is Roy’s process of rediscovering himself. Secondary school students in real life are often confused by the outside and find it difficult to extricate themselves. Through self-reflection and relating to reality, they can solve their own problems, achieve a renewed understanding of themselves, and obtain psychological harmony.

### **3 Models of Films Engaging in Secondary School Students’ Education**

As secondary school students are an important part of the film audience, education practitioners should explore the mode of involvement of films in the education of secondary school students according to their physical and mental development characteristics and their main exposure to films, so that the educational function of films for secondary school students can be effectively brought into play.

### 3.1 Secondary School Students Watch Films in Theatres

The films that secondary school students watch in cinemas are mainly new releases, and the reasons for watching them vary. There are “theme” films that schools organize to watch collectively, such as “Yang Shanzhou”, “Tianhe” and “Believers”. These films aim to eulogize the role models of the times, show the spirit of the times, set an example, carry forward the socialist core values, and cultivate secondary school students’ correct world outlook, outlook on life and values. And such viewing activities are the “living classroom” of secondary school students. Of course, more film-watching is a spontaneous act of secondary school students. Taking the films released during the 2019 Chinese New Year period as an example, there is “Wandering Earth”, which is watched for the thrill and science fiction effects; “The New King of Comedy” is watched to pay tribute to the classics and relive the sentiment; and “Crazy Aliens” is watched for laughing and have a good time, and so on. For this reason, while educators should pay attention to newly released theme films and organize students to watch them to educate them on core socialist values, guide students in watching other types of films that they are keen on. In addition, they can carry out various forms and organize discussions with students, analyze the technical aspects from lighting phantoms, explore the connotations behind the films, get inspiration from the plots and characters of the films, and guide students in a reasonable manner.

### 3.2 Secondary School Students Watch Films Online or by Downloading Them Through the Internet

With the rapid development of the information age, the Internet has become an important way and a favourable and convenient tool for secondary school students to obtain film information and watch films nowadays. The introduction of “bullet screen” for online film viewing on the Internet has provided a platform for secondary school students to engage in film entertainment. Secondary school students can comment on films as they watch them, greatly increasing the level of participation. On 2 August 2014, the first domestic film with “bullet screen” was released. Later, the form flourished on online film viewing platforms. In terms of films released in 2018, people would be shocked by the plot, watch “Operation Red Sea” and marvel at the power of the motherland; audience watch “Hello Mr. Billionaire”, dissect human nature and laugh and have a reflection; as for loves, people watch “Forever Young” and reminisce about time. These comments on the film through online viewing are all questions, introspection and reflections from the film audience. The films that can be downloaded are of course even more independent of time and space. The Internet has become an important way for secondary school students to access and watch films. For this reason, it is important for educators to provide guidance to secondary school students on online and downloadable viewing, so as to avoid distortion of facts and unbridled speculation after watching films, and avoid “verbal attacks” as a result of bullet exchanges online, and create a good environment for online viewing.

### **3.3 Secondary School Students Watch Films Through Classroom Teaching**

As a comprehensive form of artistic expression, film has become a teaching aid for many courses. In the teaching of history, a film entitled “Destruction of Opium at Humen” can provide secondary school students with an insight into the development of China during the Opium War. “The Founding of A Republic” performs the hardships of the founding of New China through its magnificent scenes. In language education, the film “A Dream in Red Mansions” presents secondary school students with vivid characters in the writings of Cao Xueqin. “The True Story of Ah Q” is a biography that allows secondary school students to gain a deeper understanding of “little people” in Lu Xun’s novels. In music teaching, “The Legend of 1900” allows secondary school students to experience the charm of the piano. “The Sound of Music” allows secondary school students to experience the joy that music brings to life and growth. In English teaching, the English soundtrack films allows secondary school students to exercise their listening and speaking skills and make improvements. Film viewing in the classroom is a better way for educators to pace themselves and effectively achieve the desired educational objectives.

## **4 The Integration of Diverse Films and Educational Practices of Secondary School Students**

### **4.1 The Integration of Educational Functions and Diversified Film-Making**

Film audiences are subjective, film texts contain multiple meanings, and the understanding of film texts is multifaceted [4]. Films carry a variety of educational functions. Although the artistic expressions and plots of films vary, they can all provoke thought and resonate with secondary school students. In the process of diversified film production, there is a need for policy regulation to support the creation and distribution of “theme” films that promote core socialist values. In the process of diversified film creation, film creators should explore the core socialist values contained in films, so that audiences can be influenced emotionally, morally and voluntarily through the process of watching films. Of course, for secondary school students, films should consider the physical and mental development characteristics of secondary school students, take materials from the events and people around them, and use vivid narratives that are close to life to trigger the empathy of secondary school students, so as to bring into play the various educational functions of diversified films.

### **4.2 Diverse Films and Secondary School Students’ Education in Practice**

With the current rapid development of the film industry, the medium of film has undoubtedly become an important spiritual content in the daily lives of adolescent, constantly influencing the words, actions and lifestyles of secondary school students [5, 6]. In the context of the booming development of diversified films, the application of diversified films to the education of secondary school students is a new connotation given by the new era. The study in middle school is the key for secondary school students to develop their world outlook, outlooks on life and values. It is required to give full

play to the educational function of diversified films and integrate them with secondary school students' education, which is also the time responsibility of diversified films. While watching films, school students can also improve the media literacy ability. This requires educators to keep an eye on secondary school students' film viewing and to provide reasonable guidance. In addition, it is required to organize secondary school students to watch theme films in order to develop their core socialist values. Students can discuss their favorite movies in various ways. Whether it is a discussion of science fiction films from a technical point of view, story films from a character detail point of view, or epic films from a scene setting point of view, the educational function of films should be brought into play, and students' aesthetics can be cultivated from the colour composition of films, and morality and psychology can be analyzed from the plot analysis of characters. And it is suggested to arouse the resonance of students, generate thinking, get inspiration, and then play the educational function of film.

## 5 Conclusion

Students studying in the secondary school are developing rapidly physically and mentally and are at a critical stage in the initial formation of their worldviews, outlooks on life and values. Film is a very popular and enjoyable form of artistic expression for secondary school students. At the same time, film art is an important carrier of aesthetic education, moral education, ideological and political education, emotional education and mental health education for secondary school students. Secondary school students can watch films by means of films viewing, online or downloadable viewing on the Internet and classroom viewing. The integration of diversified films with the educational practices of secondary school students will help to realize the functionalization of film education and explore a new model of film participation in the education of secondary school students.

**Authors' Contributions.** This paper is independently completed by Haoyu Wang.

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