The Editing Room: Same footage, different story

ENG3U, Unit 6: Truth on Screen, Lesson 2. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Editing is where documentary truth is made. The same twelve clips, put in a different order with different music and narration, can tell two opposite stories.

What students do: Students learn about the Kuleshov effect, then use an original shot log of twelve clips from a fictional town debate about a skatepark to build two opposite stories. They compare their edits with the class and discuss when editing becomes distortion.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
M 1.2	interpret media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey
M 2.2	identify conventions and/or techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they convey meaning and influence their audience
M 1.5	identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: English (2007, revised), ENG3U. OC = Oral Communication, R = Reading and Literature Studies, W = Writing, M = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning how editing creates meaning. • We are learning to recognize bias created through editing.	• I can explain the Kuleshov effect. • I can sequence the same clips to tell different stories. • I can explain how order, music and narration change meaning. • I can explain when editing becomes distortion.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** The Editing Room deck.
- **Handouts:** Shot Log (page 1), Two Edits (page 2).
- **Optional:** Index cards for the twelve clips.

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Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–10	**Kuleshov**	The experiment.	Discuss.	
10–20	**Shot log**	Twelve clips.	Read.	
20–45	**Two edits**	Build Story A and Story B.	Edit.	Choices explained.
45–60	**Compare**	Share edits.	Compare.	
60–75	**Ethics**	Editing vs distortion.	Discuss.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Clip cards to move physically.
- **ELL:** Visual storyboard instead of written order.
- **Challenge:** Write a third, balanced edit.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Two Edits	Interpreting media (M 1.2) and techniques (M 2.2)

Two edits: model orders

- **Story A (pro-skatepark):** Story A: “A Place to Belong.” Order: 2, 7, 4, 1, 11, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12. Narration: “For years, the town's teenagers have had nowhere to go… Tonight, that might change.” Music: hopeful acoustic guitar, building.
- **Story B (anti-skatepark):** Story B: “Noise Next Door.” Order: 8, 5, 1, 11, 7, 6, 3, 9, 10, 12. Narration: “Long-time residents say their quiet neighbourhood is under threat… and council isn't listening.” Music: low, tense strings.
- **Key insight:** No clip was faked, yet each story is misleading on its own. Clip 7 (kids in a parking lot) means “nowhere to go” in A and “trouble” in B.

Teacher notes

- The skatepark debate, people and quotes are fictional and original.
- The Kuleshov effect is named after Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov, who in the 1920s showed that audiences read different emotions into the same neutral face depending on the shot placed beside it.

Coming up

Lesson 3, Sound and Voice.

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