

# Let's watch a poem – analysing film poems

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## Competences and skills

The students enhance several **communicative competences**, especially their **reading** and (creative) **writing skills** as well as their **audiovisual comprehension**, and their **text** and **media competences** by working with different texts. They practice to analyse and interpret poems and discuss their results in partner and group work. Thus, this unit supports the **social competences** of the students, as well. Furthermore, the students apply their newly acquired knowledge by creating their own film poem at the end of the unit.

## Topic 1: New York City

### M1 Walt Whitman's *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun*



Walt Whitman: *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun* (Excerpts)

[...] Keep you splendid<sup>1</sup>, silent sun  
 Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods;  
 Keep your fields of clover<sup>2</sup> and timothy<sup>3</sup>, and your corn-fields and orchards; [...]  
 5 Give me faces and streets! give me these phantoms incessant<sup>4</sup> – endless along  
 the trottoirs!  
 Give me interminable<sup>5</sup> eyes! give me women! give me comings and lovers by  
 the thousand!  
 Let me see new ones every day! let me hold new ones by the hand every day!  
 10 Give me such shows! give me the streets of Manhattan!  
 Give me Broadway [...] – give me the sound of the trumpets and drums! [...]  
 – Give me the shores and the wharves<sup>6</sup> heavy-tinged with the black ships!  
 O such for me! O an intense life! [...]  
 The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!  
 15 The saloon of the steamer, and the torch-light procession! [...]  
 People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants<sup>7</sup>;  
 Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with the beating drums, as now;  
 [...] Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus – with varied cho-  
 rus, and light of the sparkling eyes;  
 20 Give me Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

#### Annotations

1 **splendid**: great – 2 **lover**: Kai/Pier – 3 **timothy**: Wiesen-Lieschgras – 4 **incessant**: never stopping – 5 **interminable**: endless –  
 6 **wharf**: Kai/Pier – 7 **pageant**: a colourful and impressive show

## M3 Worksheet – New York City

### Approaching the topic



1. Think of New York City. What comes to your mind? Work with a partner and collect ideas.

### Working with the text/video



2. Read the poem *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun* by Walt Whitman by yourself.
  - a) For yourself, describe which characteristics of New York City are important to the speaker and give quotations. Then exchange your results with your partner.
  - b) With your partner, contrast the characteristics to your ideas from 1.



3. Watch Alessio Cuomo's film poem *Ode to New York City*, which features Whitman's poem. Work with your partner.
  - a) Explain how Whitman's poem is used in the video.
  - b) Analyse and comment on the relationship between text, images and sound.
  - c) Collect ideas on general characteristics of film poems, which you will need later on.

Link: <https://cinematopoems.com/2018/10/26/ode-to-new-york-city-a-cinematic-poem-short-film-featuring-walt-whitman-directed-by-alessio-cuomo-2018/>



4. Read Stair Cook's remarks *About Film Poetry* for yourself. Sum up the excerpt and explain essential aspects of the genre film poem according to Cook by creating a list of characteristics in a small group. Compare the list to the aspects you have collected in 3c).

5. Evaluate: In how far does *Ode to New York City* fulfil Cook's definition?

6. Read Tompkins's website about film poems and watch some of the examples.
  - a) Add aspects about the genre film poem that have not been mentioned yet.
  - b) Choose one example and examine whether it follows Cook's definition of film poems.

Link: <https://learnaboutfilm.com/poem-films/>

## M10 Worksheet Categorising film poems

### Working with the texts

1. These are the film poems we have watched so far.

- Alessio Cuomo: *Ode to New York City* (M3)
- Christine Hooper: *On Loop* (M4)
- Jonathan Hodgson: *The Man with the Beautiful Eyes* (M5)
- Alastair Cook: *Filmpoem 39: I Shake Out My Coat* (M6)
- Marc Smith: *My Father's Coat* (M7/M8)

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Collect differences and similarities. Into which different categories could the film poems be organised? Work for yourself first and exchange your results with a partner.



2. Read Alastair Cook's thoughts on categorising film poems (M9) for yourself. With your partner, analyse and explain which of the examples we have watched fall into which categories.

3. Cook states that „filming poetry is about capturing the essence on film“ (L.5) and that a poetry film should be „the true embodiment of the poet's sentiment embellished in some way by (the) filmmaker.“ (L.20–21). For yourself, Examine in how far this is true for the examples we watched.

### Discussion/ comment

4. In Cook's understanding, „a film of the poet reading their work“ (L.6) cannot be a film poem. A performance, however, „by the poet or other, of the poem in a stage and audience context“ (L.13–14) can be a film poem.

- a) With your partner, discuss the difference between the modes named above. Take notes.
- b) Comment whether you agree with Alastair Cook's distinction.

5. Choose which of the examples we have watched you like best. Give reasons.

Info – Persuasive Techniques		
Persuasive Technique	How it is used	Intended effect
Bandwagon	Uses the argument that a person should believe or do something because “everybody else” does	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers buy the product because they want to fit in.</li> <li>• Consumers assume that if others buy it, the product must be good.</li> </ul>
Bait and Switch	Dishonest tactic in which a salesperson lures customers into a store promising a bargain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers are persuaded to buy a more expensive item.</li> </ul>
Celebrity Spokesperson	Uses a celebrity or famous person to endorse a product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers transfer admiration or respect for celebrity to the product.</li> </ul>
Emotional Appeals	Make viewers feel certain emotions, such as excitement, sadness, or fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience transfers that feeling to the product.</li> </ul>
Glittering Generalities	Emphasises highly valued beliefs, such as patriotism, peace, or freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers accept this information, often without enough real evidence to support the claim.</li> </ul>
Humour	Used to make audiences laugh, but provides little information about the product or service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers remember the ad and associate positive feelings with the product.</li> </ul>
Individuality	Appeals to consumers’ desire to be different from everyone else; the opposite of the bandwagon appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers celebrate their own style, or rebel against what others are doing.</li> <li>• Consumers perceive the product as unique, stylish, or cool.</li> </ul>

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