

How to Read a Silent Film: Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman*

A Directed Viewing Activity

Overview

Do boys want to be popular? How far will an “ordinary” guy go to become the most popular man at school? How do you know when friends are true and not just flattering you to get what they want? *The Freshman* (1925, directed by Sam Taylor and Fred Newmeyer) is an engaging story of a young man whose naivety invites practical jokes from the school bully. With the help of a friend, the freshman learns to be true to himself rather than trying to impress others. He rises above all his embarrassments and achieves his dream of being the college hero. He even wins the heart of the girl he loves.

Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman* is not a historical film. Made in 1925, it was a story about college life at that time. Today, however, *The Freshman* is a piece of historical Americana. The movie provides a rich tapestry of images from the 1920s, including modes of transportation, fashions, and sports. It is a peek at Prohibition and the jazz age, when men were cheerleaders and football players like Red Grange were media heroes.

More importantly, *The Freshman* is an excellent film for teaching narrative structure and developing students' critical-thinking skills. Visual language, like printed texts, can present messages that are both directly stated and implied. Learning to identify nuances in meaning in moving images allows children to practice and develop their inference skills. The activities below, organized for presentation over a five-day period, focus on both decoding the film (teaching children how to read a frame, how to read a scene, and thereby how to read the film), and exploring the historical/cultural context of the film's setting—an American college in the 1920s.

Learning Objectives

Students will

- identify basic story elements in narrative films, including character, setting, conflict, rising action, resolution, and theme;
- understand that title cards have multiple purposes;
- describe how ideas and emotions are expressed in film through images;
- identify and distinguish various camera shots, including long shot, medium shot, close-up;
- understand how time and place influence visual characteristics that give meaning to film;
- understand how visual and sound symbols are used to communicate meaning in a film;
- express personal responses to film, comparing and contrasting how characters and/or conflicts in a film relate to their own lives.

Supplementary Materials to the Teaching Guide

- *The Freshman* PowerPoint Slide Show
- *The Freshman*, feature film, available on the Harold Lloyd Comedy Collection, Volume 2 DVD

Scope and Sequence of Learning Activities

Teacher's Note: For students who have never seen a silent film, some basic information is necessary to explain how these early films communicated with audiences. Lesson 1, therefore, provides basic information on how to read a sequence of shots in a silent film.

The subsequent lessons and screening of the film can be covered in approximately four 45-minute class periods. As with DRAs, the Directed Viewing Activity (DVA) uses the strategy of pre-screening discussion points on historical/cultural context and narrative structure, followed by screening of the selected chapters, and then discussion of the action and predictions of what may happen next.

Lesson	Materials	Activities
1. How to Read a Silent Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PowerPoint Slide Show Images 1 – 9	A: The Title Card B: Reading Between the Frames—The Reaction Shot C: The Soundtrack—The Silents Weren't Always Silent!
2. Characters and Conflict—Harold Leaves Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DVD Chapters 1 – 4• Slide Image 10	D. Bing! Bang! Blooey!!!
3. Plot—Rising Action and Complications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DVD Chapters 5 – 8• Slide Images 11 - 15	E: Speedy the Spender F. <i>Enrichment</i> —Anatomy of a Silent Movie Gag
4. Turning Point—Be True to Yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DVD Chapters 9 – 13• Slide Image 16	G: Keeping Up Appearances
5. Theme—The College Hero	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DVD Chapters 14 – 16• Slide Images 17 – 21	H: Number Zero I: <i>Research Extension</i> —Who Was Harold Lloyd?

Lesson 1 How to Read a Silent Film

Activity A: The Title Card

- Display and discuss **PPT Slide 1: Introduction to Silent Film – The Title Card**. Explain the purpose of title cards. Title cards were frames of printed text shown at various points throughout the film. Title cards had three primary purposes:

One, to provide titles and credits for the movie, including the names of the characters and actors as well as the director and other key film crew members.

Two, to provide background information (also called *expository information*) about a character or a setting. This was information the audience needed to know in order to better understand the action that was to come. Sometimes the title card provided commentary about a character, suggesting his or her personality strengths or weaknesses.

Three, to present dialogue, spoken by one or more of the characters.

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. The first title card introduces the audience both to the setting of the next scene and also to one of the story's main characters. What is the setting? *Students must infer that "on the Tate Limited" is the setting but many students may not be aware of what a "limited" was. Explain that audiences in the 1920s would have understood that the "Tate Limited" was an express train that had only a few (or limited) number of stops to its destination – in this case, Tate University.*
2. The title card compares Peggy to "your mother." What does this mean? What is the title card suggesting about Peggy's character? *Again, students must infer that this comparison is a compliment. Most people admire and love their mothers—at least that would have been the popular sentiment for the audiences of the 1920s. Peggy, therefore, is presented as an innocent and caring person.*
3. The second title card is a line of dialogue. How do you know who is speaking? *Emphasize the use of quotation marks as a marker that someone is speaking the line. This is no different from printed text in a book, except that the "he said" or "she said" is missing. Explain that title cards with dialogue were placed in a specific sequence, or order, so that the audience understood who was speaking. The camera might show a shot of one character before the card, then a reaction shot of another character.*

- Display **PPT Slide 2: Who's Speaking?** Emphasize that filmmakers communicated to their audiences not only through the selection of images but also through the sequence (or juxtaposition) of those images. The order of the images shapes meaning.

- Ask students to read the three images, from left to right. What meaning can they infer from the juxtaposition—or sequence—of the images on this slide? Most students will “read between the frames” and understand that the two characters are reading the clues on a crossword puzzle and thinking of possible answers. The person speaking could be the boy or the girl but draw students’ attention to the boy’s facial expression and body language. The girl is looking down and her mouth is closed. He is turned a bit towards her and his hand is raised. Subtle visual clues like these are what the audience reads in order to understand the meaning of the sequence of images. The boy—named Harold in the story—is the one speaking.
- Conclude the activity by displaying and discussing **PPT Slide 3: Photograph vs. Title Card**. Emphasize that a title card is text printed on a frame of film. Sometimes an image may appear in the background, as in the case of the cast of characters in the frame on the right. The frame on the left, however, is *not* a title card, even though it, too, has printed text. It is instead a photograph of a bank book. Ask students to comment on the differences between the two frames.

Activity B: Reading Between the Frames—The Reaction Shot

- Introduce the activity by asking students what is meant by the phrase “reading between the lines.” To read between the lines means to grasp the intended meaning or mood of spoken words or a printed passage of prose. Language has connotations, and word choice (as well as tone of voice) suggests meaning and mood. Explain that the same is true in a visual language like moving images. Instead of reading between the lines, however, the viewer must learn to read between the frames of film.
- Review the definition of both explicit and implicit information.

Explicit information is clearly and directly stated or shown. The reader or viewer does not have to guess the meaning of the statement. Explicit information does not allow for multiple interpretations or doubt. There is no guessing involved. Example: *It is raining* is an explicit statement of fact that a person can observe. The person can see and feel the rain falling.

Implicit information is not stated directly but it is understood based on the choice of words or by inference. Example: A person comes inside carrying a dripping umbrella. The wet umbrella suggests that it is raining.

- Display and discuss **PPT Slide 4: Explicit and Implicit Information** with students. These are title cards from the movie *The Freshman*.

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. What factual information about Harold do you learn from reading the frame on the left?
Harold has sold washing machines and he has saved money for college.
2. Frame 2 on the right has no factual information. Instead, the title card suggests something about going to college. What is that suggestion? *Answers will vary somewhat but should*

include the main idea that going to college was popular and being a football player (“right tackle”) is more exciting or desirable than being President of the United States.

■ Display and discuss **PPT Slide 5: Is It Explicit or Implicit?**

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. What is explicitly stated on this title card? *It is Fall and school has started at Tate University.*
2. What is implicitly stated on this title card? *Students must infer from the choice of language that the football stadium is larger and more important than academics; that studying, which takes place inside the college buildings, is less important than playing football, which happens in the stadium.*

■ Share with students the meaning of *reaction shot*. In filmmaking, a reaction shot shows how a character or characters react to an action or a sound. The camera usually moves closer to the character so that the audience can “read” the character’s facial expression or body language. Reaction shots communicate *implicit* information, implying what a character may be feeling or thinking. It does not state that reaction directly.

■ Display and discuss **PPT Slide 6: The Reaction Shot**. Ask students to explain what is happening in these two frames. What explicit information is presented in the first frame? What implicit information is presented in the second frame? What is the woman thinking or feeling? How do you know?

■ Display and discuss **PPT Slide 7: Reading the Shots**.

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. Who is speaking in frame two? Give a reason for your answer. *Students should infer from the body language of the three characters that it is the older woman (leaning toward the boy and the girl with her arms around them) who is speaking.*
2. Which of the three frames is the reaction shot and what is the emotion suggested in this frame? *The third frame is the reaction shot. The emotion is surprise or shock. Again, students must read the subtle visual clues—the boy and girl’s wide eyes stare forward and not at one another.*
3. Why did the camera show the reaction of both the boy and the girl? *To indicate that both the boy and the girl are equally surprised by the older woman’s assumption*

Activity C: The Soundtrack—The Silents Weren’t Always Silent!

- Share this information with students:

In the 1920s, filmmaking technology to synchronize a soundtrack with the images playing on the screen did not exist. That doesn’t mean, however, that silent films were truly silent. Often movie theaters hired musicians to play music to accompany the images on the screen. In large cities, very often the theater hired an ensemble (or group) of musicians to play during the screening of the film. How did they know what to play? Sometimes the movie studio that distributed the films also provided sheet music for the local musicians. The music matched the moving images in tone and tempo. For example, if a scene was sentimental and sweet, the music would be soft and slow. If a character was being chased, then the music was livelier and the tempo, fast-paced. In this way, music influenced how the audience reacted to the screened images. Music helped to tell the story.

Silent films were so popular in the 1920s that the majority of musicians in America found work in movie theaters. All this would change in the 1930s when filmmaking technology developed the recorded soundtrack.

- Display **PPT Slide 8: The Fotoplayer.** Explain that during the 1920s, the filmmaking industry gave birth to a new type of instrument—the fotoplayer. It was an organ but also had “traps” or compartments that held a variety of percussion instruments, including cymbals and bells, horns and whistles. This allowed the operator of the instrument to create sound effects when necessary to match the moving images on the screen.
- Display **PPT Slide 9: Picturolls.** Explain that the fotoplayer was like a player piano in that rolls of music were inserted into the instruments. Once the film began, the operator started the fotoplayer. Music and, when appropriate, sound effects filled the theater. Draw students’ attention to what is written on the rolls. One roll is labeled *Romance* and so would be appropriate for those type of scenes. Another roll is labeled as the *Prelude to “Cyrano”* and contained music from an opera version of the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*.
- **Play** a short clip from chapter 2 of *The Freshman* DVD. Start at 4:55 on the DVD and play through to 6:10 (1 minute and 15 seconds). First, turn off the sound and play the segment. Then play the segment again with sound.

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. Describe the music as the segment begins. *The tone is somber or serious, almost patriotic.*
2. At what point does the music change? *When the father enters the room*
3. Describe the music that accompanies Harold’s little “jig.” *The music is light, quick, and frivolous.*

4. The music doesn't tell you what is happening, but it just might influence how you *react* to what you see. What does the music suggest about the boy? *The somber, patriotic music suggests that being the most popular man on campus is a big deal to him. The music that accompanies the jig is almost cartoonish. It suggests the boy is silly.*

- Conclude the activity by sharing with students this information about the soundtrack on the film they are viewing in class.

The music heard on the soundtrack for the film you are viewing in class is not quite the same music as might have been played in movie theaters in the 1920s. Here's why: Movie studios often selected popular music to accompany a film. In this way, smaller theaters that had only a piano or an organ could more easily find the sheet music to perform. "For road show attractions or bigger films," says composer Robert Israel, "the studio might have actually hired a composer to write a complete score." But in smaller towns, the luxury of an orchestra didn't exist.

In order to re-release the Harold Lloyd films, a new soundtrack had to be written. One reason is that the music used in the 1920s might be difficult to locate. Robert Israel studied the film and music of the era and then composed the soundtrack that accompanies the present-day version on DVD of "The Freshman."

Lesson 2 Characters and Conflict—Harold Leaves Home

Activity D: Bing! Bang!! Blooey!!!

Pre-screening

- Display **PPT Slide 10: College Cheers!** This slide offers four different college cheers from the 1920s. Ask students to read the cheers aloud. Then you—or a student—can lead the class in a unified cheer. This is a fun ice-breaker as students listen to the playful words. The activity serves another purpose, however. It will help students to understand Harold's enthusiasm in the opening scenes of the story.
- Introduce the screening activity. Explain that students are going to watch the opening scenes of the film. In these scenes they will meet two of the main characters and learn important information about them.

Screening

Screen DVD Chapters 1 – 4.

Post-screening

GUIDED DISCUSSION

DVD Chapter 2: Bing! Bang!! Blooey!!!

1. One way to learn about a character is to pay attention to what other characters say about him or her. What do you learn about Harold from his parents in the opening scene? *Harold has saved money by working, which means he is both ambitious and thrifty. His parents seem proud of him and his desire to go to college.*
2. Two other ways to learn about a character is to pay attention to the character's physical appearance and to his or her behavior. Describe Harold's behavior when you first see him in this film. What does this tell you about him? *Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that Harold is very enthusiastically preparing for college—not by studying, however. The book he opens is a book about college cheers. Later he opens the Tate college yearbook and studies the photo of the most popular man on campus. Some students will read between the frames and understand that Harold wants to go to college to become a big man, and not necessarily to get an education.*
3. The scene ends with the father confiding to his wife his fears about Harold going away to college. What are those fears? How does this final shot foreshadow what may happen as the story progresses? *He thinks his son's need to be popular may result in the other students making fun of him. Remind students that all lines in a film are included for a reason and not just to fill up time or space. The line is intended to prepare the audience for Harold becoming the dupe of the college students' jokes.*

DVD Chapter 3: To Tate University

4. The second major character in the story is the school bully. What is the bully making the other students do? *He is making the new students take off their hats and bow to the upper classmen, who in turn laugh at them.*
5. What role might the bully play later in the story? *Most students will predict correctly that the bully will target Harold.*
6. Describe Peggy's physical appearance and behavior in the scene on the train. What conclusions can you make about Peggy's character based on her physical appearance and behavior in the scene, as well as on the title cards? *Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that Peggy is a sweet girl who is nothing like the school bully. The title cards with dialogue indicate that Peggy lives with her mother in a boarding house and works another job as well. She is not a college student.*

7. How does this scene on the train foreshadow what may come later? *The older woman's suggestion that the two are in love is a hint that the relationship between Harold and Peggy may, in time, develop into a romance.*
8. Harold and the "college hero" both arrive at the train station on campus at the same time. How do their arrivals on campus differ? *No one is there to meet Harold. He watches as others happily greet one another, even giving hugs and kisses. But he is alone. Once the popular hero arrives, the students at the station all cluster around him. Harold joins them.*
9. This scene (and screening activity) ends with the school bully playing a practical joke on Harold. Explain the joke, then comment on whether the joke is funny or not. *Students should infer that the driver of the car has not seen who has entered the back seat. If he had, he would not have driven away. They must likewise understand that such a joke would not have worked on upper classmen because they would know that the college doesn't provide chauffeured transportation to the school from the train station. As to whether the joke is funny, answers will vary but students should understand that the joke serves two purposes—to entertain the audience but also to suggest that Harold is naive about life on a college campus.*

DVD Chapter 4: A Rough First Day

10. As the next scene begins, Harold enters the Tate Auditorium from a side entrance—something he would not have done if the bully hadn't tricked him into the Dean's car. Harold is backstage. What is happening on the other side of the curtain in the auditorium? *The students are gathering for an assembly, expecting to be addressed by the Dean of the college.*
11. In your opinion, why does Harold rescue the kitten? *This incident provides some humor but it also helps to develop Harold's character, showing his kindness and his willingness to help even a stray cat.*
12. Who opens the curtain and why? *The bully. Students must infer that the assembly is not about to begin. The bully is intentionally making fun of the freshman.*
13. Encouraged to make a speech, Harold first peers from behind the curtain at the audience. The next shot, which is of the audience, is blurred. Why? What does this special effect suggest about Harold's emotional state? *He is nervous.*
14. Standing in the wings with the bully are Chet and Hazel (the college hero and the college belle). Why do they go along with the joke? *Answers will vary but this particular scene allows students to comment on whether the joke is good-natured or has gone too far. Since Chet and Hazel are very popular, they are likely not afraid of the bully. They seem genuinely to think the joke is just good fun.*
15. The scene ends with Harold seemingly making new friends. Has he? *Answers will vary. Some may suggest that perhaps the bully, Chet and Hazel have accepted Harold because he didn't fall apart. He survived the "initiation. Does this mean that they're now friends? Others*

gather to follow Harold to the ice cream shop without being specifically asked. Would you consider these students to be friends?

- Conclude the lesson by reviewing the meaning of *expository information*. This is background information about the characters or the setting. The information may seem minor at first but usually these details are necessary for the audience to understand fully the story's conflict and meaning. These details—about Harold's thriftiness, Peggy living with her mother, and the bully's mean streak—become the basis for making predictions on how the story will develop. Ask students to predict what may happen next to Harold and his relationship with Peggy, and his efforts to become the most popular man on campus.

Lesson 3 Plot—Rising Action and Complications

Activity E: Speedy the Spender

Pre-screening

- Display and discuss **PPT Slides 11, 12, and 13**. These slides will introduce students to some of the historical/cultural context of college football's immense popularity in the 1920s, as well as prepare them for the scenes they'll screen in this lesson.

Football stars like Red Grange (shown on slide 12) became media heroes, role models for young men. Teachers may limit discussion of the slides to the recommended points below or, as an extension activity, encourage students to research the history of football and the media's coverage of it in the 1920s.

SLIDE 11: Illustrations from the 1920s

The image on the left is an illustration from a piece of sheet music. Explain that sheet music for parlor pianos was a popular form of entertainment in the 1920s. Families purchased sheet music for their favorite songs and learned to play them on their instruments at home. The image on the right is from a magazine.

GUIDED DISCUSSION

1. Who are the "characters" in the images? *They are young adults, teenagers likely although the term "teenager" was not used at the time. They would be about the same age as the characters in this film.*

2. What are they doing? *In the image on the left, the football player is posing while the girl idolizes him. In the image on the right, the boy is a cheerleader performing a chant or yell.*
3. What is the message of each? *Responses will vary but the overall message suggests the popularity of football in American society.*
4. Who are the intended audiences for these **illustrations**? *Other young people interested in this American sport*

SLIDE 12: The Galloping Ghost

Share with students this brief biography of Grange, taken from the Football Hall of Fame website:

Harold Edward Grange . . . Three-time All-America, 1923-1925 . . . Earned "Galloping Ghost" fame as whirling dervish runner at Illinois . . . Joined Bears on Thanksgiving Day, 1925. . . Magic name produced first huge pro football crowds on 17-game barnstorming tour. . . With manager, founded rival American Football League, 1926. . . Missed entire 1928 season with injury. . . Excelled on defense in latter years. . . Born June 13, 1903, in Forksville, Pennsylvania . . . Died January 28, 1991, at age of 87.

SLIDE 13: What Is College Spirit?

This quote from a book published in 1917 indicates the importance of college spirit in a school's success. The first paragraph focuses on sports and the contribution the team players and spectators can—and in fact are expected to—make.

Although the language of the passage is a bit complex for younger students, focus their attention on key words: *loyal, social welfare, common interest*, as these phrases summarize the main idea. The author believes college spirit means giving up individual stardom for the good of the team. In other words, there is no “I” in team.

Screening

 Screen **DVD Chapters 5 - 8.**

Post-screening

GUIDED DISCUSSION

DVD Chapter 5: Speedy the Spender

1. What has happened to Harold's shirt? *Students must infer that the kitten he placed inside his shirt tore it. But the torn shirt serves another purpose—forcing Harold to do some of his own mending. Peggy offers to help him and so the kitten actually triggers a development in the relationship between Harold and Peggy.*

2. How does Harold get Peggy to stay longer with him? *He snips off the buttons on his jacket.*
3. Why would a story about a freshman spending money be considered news for a college newspaper? Why is this close-up shot of the photo caption important to the storyline? *Remind students that a “tattler” is a gossip. So the college newspaper isn’t just about news. It includes gossip about students. The story and the close-up shot shows that Harold is becoming popular but not for the best of reasons—spending money. This suggests that Harold’s popularity is based not on who he is but how he behaves.*
4. Harold at first pins the article about himself in the *Tate Tattler* on the wall next to the photo of Chet. Why does Harold move his news article below Chet’s on the wall? *The initial position of the piece suggests equality. When Harold moves the article below Chet, he is admitting that while the college paper did a story on him, he is not yet equal in popularity to Chet.*
5. The other college students, as well as Peggy, read the article about Harold. Describe how they react. What does this reveal about their attitude towards Harold? *The other students, including the bully, read and then laugh at what the article says. When Harold appears, they gather around him. Once Chet appears with his car, however, the girls leave Harold and go with Chet. Peggy, on the other hand, cuts the article from the paper and smiles down at it. Her reaction is quite different from the college students. She seems to admire Harold. More importantly, she tears off the caption and keeps the image of Harold. This suggests that she is more interested in him as a person rather than as someone who is popular.*

DVD Chapter 6: The Tackling Dummy

6. The title card that opens this chapter of the DVD states “Football practice—where men are men and necks are nothing.” What is the meaning of this card? *Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that football is rough and getting hurt is to be expected rather than feared.*
7. How does the music change once this chapter begins? Why? *The music is marching band music, reflecting the scene—football practice. This type of lively music is intended to spark college spirit and also reflects the coach’s efforts to inspire his players to tackle hard.*
8. When Chet opens the door, Harold is standing in the doorway – framed, wearing his helmet and his nose and teeth guard. Why is this funny? *Harold is overly protected. The other team members aren’t wearing their helmets and none has a nose guard.*
9. Explain the misunderstanding in this scene when Harold first arrives at football practice. Do the team players understand whom the coach is talking about? Does Harold? *The team knows that Chet has walked away and Harold is now standing in his place, but the coach doesn’t know this. This is classic comedy—where the audience*

knows something that a character doesn't. Harold, however, seems to be flattered that the coach would speak of him so highly. Again this reveals Harold's naivety.

10. Why does the coach send Harold away from practice? And then why does he change his mind and ask Harold to stay? *Harold has little talent with a football. But the coach thinks he could be a good tackling dummy.*
11. Why does Harold stick with practice? *Harold has college spirit. He wants so badly to be a part of the team that he's willing to endure the punishment of being tackled over and over again.*

DVD Chapter 7: Sticking Up For Harold

12. As this scene opens, there is a sight gag. Harold falls and appears to be bending his knee at an impossible angle. What has really happened? *Some students may not notice the shot initially but in a second screening, when looking for it, they see it and appreciate the slapstick humor. Harold has fallen on the stuffed tackling dummy. It isn't his leg—though at first he thinks it is. It is the dummy's.*
13. If Harold has great “spirit” as the coach says, then why can't the coach put him on the team? Is this fair or unfair in your opinion? *Answers will vary. Remind students that winning the game was all-important, not the self-esteem of individual players. Remind them, too, of the quote on PPT Slide 13. At the time, many in society believed that college spirit was about the common good.*
14. There is a sound gag (in a silent movie!) once Harold gets out of the taxi cab. Explain the gag. *When he bends over, he hears a crack and thinks it is his back breaking. The sound is actually the gardener at work. Still, it reveals how much pain Harold must be feeling.*
15. How does Peggy learn the truth about Harold's position on the football team? Why doesn't she tell Harold the truth when she has the opportunity to do so? What does this tell you about Peggy's character? What would you have done if you were Peggy? *Peggy overhears the other students laughing about Harold. She attempts to tell him the truth, but she sees how happy he is and decides to keep silent—at least for now. Peggy is more considerate of Harold's feelings than the others.*
16. After Harold learns he has made the team (or thinks he has), he moves his photograph from the *Tate Tattler* to a new position on the wall. What is that position and what might this suggest about what Harold is thinking? *He believes he is becoming more popular, in fact as popular as Chet.*

DVD Chapter 8: Tailor Made

17. Why does Harold decide to hold a “Fall Frolic” or formal dance? *Everything Harold has done up to this point is to please the other college students. He believes if he spends money on*

them, they'll be his friend. If he allows them to tackle him as a "dummy" in football practice, they'll admire him. If he hosts the Fall Frolic, they will likely vote him the most popular man on campus for that year.

18. What important piece of expository information about the tailor does the audience learn in this scene? What do you predict may happen? *He has dizzy spells that go away if he has a drink of brandy.*
19. This scene sets up a future complication that will occur in the next few scenes. What might that complication be? *Answers will vary but should focus on the tailor completing the suit in time for the Fall Frolic.*

- Conclude the lesson by asking students what they would have done if they were Peggy. Would they have told Harold the truth about the football team? Why or why not? What would they have done if they were Chet? Should Chet have told Harold the truth about his position on the team?

Activity F: Enrichment—Anatomy of a Silent Movie Gag

- Ask students to explain what, in terms of comedy, is meant by a “gag.” Common responses will include “a joke” or “trick”. The word seems simple enough to understand but in fact, *gag* has an interesting history relative to vaudeville, a popular type of entertainment at the beginning of the 20th Century. Because vaudeville featured performance art, a *vaudeville gag* was a *visual joke*. In early cinema, gags were comic actions performed by the actor. They were carefully crafted and choreographed movements and dialogue that resulted in a laugh. Harold Lloyd was a master at visual gags.
- Display **PowerPoint Slide 14: Set-Up, Build-Up, Punchline!** Review the text, beginning with the set-up and continuing up to the punchline.
- Display **PowerPoint Slide 15: Gag Example: The Model Football Player.** Again review each step as the gag unfolds. Ideally, screen the scene again (which begins at the start of chapter 6) so that students can “see” the visual gag unfold.
- Ask students to analyze other “gag” examples from chapter 8 of the film (“Tailor Made”). The tuxedo is a masterfully choreographed gag.

The set-up includes two key details: the tailor has dizzy spells and Harold hasn’t enough money for a better suit.

The build-up includes the following details: The suit isn’t quite ready, the seams are just basted, and so it begins to fall apart. Each time Harold manages to hide the problem. The audience knows what Harold knows but the college kids have no idea.

The punchline is that, ultimately, his suit simply falls apart. The joke’s on Harold.

- Introduce and explain if necessary the cinematic term *pacing*. Pacing refers to timing. Timing means how long a shot or scene should run. Pacing can be quick or slow or somewhere in between. It all depends on the purpose of the scene. A filmmaker may want to draw out a sequence of shots in order to create an effect—perhaps build suspense or heighten the humor of a scene. On the other hand, a scene may require a rapid sequence of shots, again in order to create an effect or reaction in the audience, such as to suggest the rapid passage of time.
- Emphasize that *pacing* is another important element in most silent film comedies. To clarify the meaning of pacing and how it actually works, share the information below with students.

Silent film comedies contain many gags, or comic actions performed by an actor. Pacing is an important element in the actor's performance. If he or she performs the comic action too quickly, the audience may not fully appreciate the humor. Pacing, therefore, depends on the situation. In Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman*, the scene on stage where Harold rescues the kitten is an example of near perfect comic pacing. The gag begins once Harold places the kitten inside his sweater. Before the kitten is freed to be reunited with its mother, a number of diversions occur so that the audience, even if only for a few moments, actually forgets the kitten is still inside Harold's clothing. These diversions—Harold's suitcase falls open, and he accidentally shocks himself with the sword—add rhythm to the scene and help to heighten the humor.

- Screen again the scene from Chapter 4 where Harold rescues the kitten and then tries to address the student body. It begins at approximately 14:30 on the DVD timer and concludes at approximately 18:32 as the mother cat and her kitten exit the stage. Encourage students to comment, not only on Lloyd's comic performance—he tries very hard to pretend the kitten isn't there—but also on the reaction of the other characters in the scene. By showing their reaction, the filmmaker prolongs the scene, actually slows down the pace, so that the real audience in the movie theater can appreciate the gag.
- Conclude this activity by explaining to students that silent film audiences expected to see these visual gags and so the gags became very much a part of silent film comedy. But more than just laughter, these gags required audiences to pay attention to details and to make inferences.

Lesson 4 Turning Point—Be True to Yourself

Activity G: Keeping Up Appearances

Pre-screening

- Display and discuss **PPT Slide 16: Fashions in the 1920s**. For women, especially younger women, the “flapper” style was all about freedom. Whereas women of the first decades of the 20th century were likely to wear long dresses and corsets and have long hair (often worn upswept in a chignon), the modern American girl of the 1920s adopted the shapeless shift dress that came to just below the knees. She also bobbed her hair into a short style. For the well-dressed man, a tailored suit was a must! Remind students that prior to going to college, Harold had studied pamphlets in his house, one of which was titled *Clever Clothes for College Men*.
- Share with students the following *cinematic convention* (distinguishing characteristic) of silent films in the 1920s: Although silent movies were filmed in black and white, the film in some scenes was sometimes tinted—shades of blue or brown, for example. Blue-tinted film often suggested the action took place at night. Movie-going audiences of the 1920s understood this convention or filmmaking technique. In the scenes the class will view next, they will see the use of blue and brown tinted film. These blue tinted shots indicate exterior, or outdoor, settings. The brown-tinted shots are inside during the Fall Frolic.

Screening

- Screen **DVD Chapters 9 - 13**.

Post-screening

GUIDED DISCUSSION

DVD Chapter 9: The Fall Frolic

20. Rising action always involves a complication for a character. What complication arises that threatens to ruin Harold’s frolic? *His suit is not ready. Ensure students understand the difference between a sewed seam and a basted seam.*
21. The girls rush to dance with Harold. Why? *Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that they are still flattering him for their own benefit. Some students may suggest that Harold is becoming popular and perhaps, in a way, he is. But if he is, then it’s because he has bought his popularity.*
22. Identify a reaction shot in this scene. *When Harold folds his arms, the seam of his jacket tears open. The camera captures Harold’s surprise.*

DVD Chapter 10: Keeping Him In Stitches

23. This scene has gags galore—and most likely kept audiences “in stitches” of laughter. Explain the bell gag. How is this similar to crying wolf? *The student hits the bell to get service—another glass of whatever it is he is drinking. Harold thinks it is the tailor warning him of another tear in his suit. It is like “crying wolf” because when he does tear his suit and the tailor does ring the bell, Harold ignores it.*
24. Explain the money gag. Who gives the bully the money and who steals it back and how do you know? *The tailor slips his hand into Harold’s pocket to give the bully the money. Harold steals it back. The audience sees what the bully does not—that for a few moments there are three arms in view.*
25. Identify two close-up shots in this scene and explain what each shot reveals or suggests about the character or the conflict. *Among the close-ups are: sweat on Harold’s face, suggesting his anxiety about his clothing; Harold twirling a thread on his pant legs, revealing that the basting is coming loose.*
26. Why does Harold secretly lift the coat jackets of the male dancers? *He’s looking for a flask of liquor which many young men carried in their hip pockets. Remind students that alcohol was illegal because of Prohibition, but often people secretly carried a flask containing alcohol.*

DVD Chapter 11: Caught With His Pants Down

27. From whom does Harold get the hip flask? *The bully.*
28. Harold watches Peggy plucking petals from a daisy. When she nods, he nods. When she shakes her head, he shakes his head. What does this scene communicate to the audience? *First, that Peggy cares deeply for Harold and wonders how he might feel about her; that Harold is equally concerned with the outcome of the petal fortune-telling. When he sees that the final petal is “he loves me” and that Peggy is happy with that, he beams. Harold is in love.*
29. Explain how Harold loses his pants in this scene. Is this funny? Tell why you think so. *Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable responses.*

DVD Chapter 12: The College Boob

30. Rising action always involves cause-and-effect events. Harold defends Peggy by punching the bully. As a result, what happens next? *The bully tells Harold what the others really think about him.*
31. How does Harold react to this revelation? *His body language reveals multiple emotions—anger, embarrassment, bravado, and then finally heartbreak as he realizes how foolish he has been.*

32. In your opinion, what upsets Harold more—realizing that the college students aren't really his friends, or realizing that Peggy knows how the others really think about him? Provide a reason for your answer. *Answers will vary. If Harold were truly ashamed that Peggy saw his humiliation, he doesn't show it. When she holds out her arms to comfort him, he falls into her lap.*

DVD Chapter 13: Be True To Yourself

33. Editing is one way filmmakers tell a story. In this scene, while Harold is crying in Peggy's arms, the camera suddenly cuts to the interior of Harold's room. What does the audience see and what does this shot symbolize? *The camera shows the article that Harold had pinned on the wall falling into the waste paper basket. The photograph from the college newspaper symbolized to Harold his increasing popularity. When the photograph falls into the waste basket, it symbolizes the deflation of his dream.*

- Conclude the lesson by asking students to discuss Peggy's belief—that Harold was pretending to be someone he truly wasn't in order for others to like him. Ask: Is Peggy correct? Have you ever acted as Harold has acted—pretending to be someone you really weren't, just so others would accept you? What was the consequence of this?

Lesson 5 Theme—The College Hero

Activity H: Number Zero

Pre-screening

- Share this information with students:

The filmmakers shot an actual football game to include in this film. The long shots of the stadium and the spectators were shot at the University of California, Berkeley. Adding real-life football shots adds realism to the film. You may wish to emphasize, however, that at this time in America's history television was not yet invented, and so people did not watch football games in their homes.

Screening

- Screen **DVD Chapters 14 - 16.**

Post-screening

GUIDED DISCUSSION

DVD Chapter 14: Coming Off the Bench

34. At the Fall Frolic, the bully told Harold that he was *not* an ordinary guy but rather the college boob. As this scene opens, does Harold seem to harbor resentment against the others? Provide a reason for your answer. *He does not. He's involved in the action on the field and hopeful that he'll still get a chance to play.*
35. Most of the players are injured in this game and carried off the field on stretchers. Is this a gag or is it a realistic depiction of the game as it was played in the 1920s? *Answers will vary but remind students of the title card from earlier in the film—that "necks were nothing."*
36. Harold tells Dave that there's hope yet that he and Dave will get into the game. The camera then cuts to a close-up shot of a pail of water. What does this communicate to the audience? *The juxtaposition of what Harold tells Dave, Dave's glance, and then the image of the water pail indicates that Dave knows Harold is not a substitute but rather the water boy. But he says nothing about that to Harold at this time.*
37. What is the significance of the zero on Harold's football shirt? *It symbolizes his role on the team. He has no position. He's not really a player.*

DVD Chapter 15: The Water Boy

38. How does Harold's behavior change in this scene? That is, how does he behave differently than he has previously? *In other scenes, he accepted when he lost. In this scene, he fights hard for his right to get into the game. Students should note the reaction shots that reveal what others think of him—the coach is surprised, as is one of the team's players on the field. Their facial expressions indicate that this is a side of Harold they haven't seen before.*
39. Is Harold a good football player? *Answers will vary, but clearly the shots that show him getting pummeled and running the wrong way suggest he isn't a good player. But others may suggest that his refusal to give up makes him a valuable team player.*
40. Harold makes a touchdown with a bowler hat. Explain why you do or do not think this scene is funny. *Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable responses.*

DVD Chapter 16: Over the Line

41. Explain the balloon gag. Tell why you think this is or is not funny. *Students must read the juxtaposition of images to understand that the man releases the balloons and they, in turn, confuse Harold so that once again, he fails to make a skillful play. Answers will vary about whether this sort of slapstick image is funny.*

42. Why does Harold drop the ball just short of a touchdown? *A whistle blows but it isn't the referee's whistle. It is the whistle from a factory, as indicated by the close-up shot of the factory whistle.*
43. Harold seemingly sees people he knows in the stands, reacting to his goof-up. How does he react to them? *People are still laughing at him. Instead of giving up, however, he shows his true "spirit" and his strength of character and pushes forward, more determined than ever to do well.*
44. After the end of the game, what is the significance of the students and the coach doing Harold's little dance? What does this tell you about how the students think of Harold now? *He truly has become a football hero and they admire him. What they laughed at previously, they now adopt.*
45. Falling action is the tying up of all loose ends of a story. Why doesn't the story end with Harold, now the hero and not the fool, carried off the field on the shoulders of his teammates? What additional information is necessary in order to resolve all plot elements? *The camera takes the audience inside the locker room so that they can see that Harold is being congratulated by the team, but also to see what Peggy has written to Harold. Harold has not only won the game, he has won the girl.*
46. Did Harold achieve his dream of becoming the most popular man on campus? Or will another young freshman arrive on campus to take Harold's place? *Answers will vary. Encourage students to comment on Harold's quest for popularity and why this was important to him. Some students may suggest that Harold no longer seeks or needs to be the most popular man on campus now that he has Peggy.*

- Conclude the lesson by asking students to write a news report for the *Tate Tattler*, describing the football game and Harold's role in the victory. Keep in mind that this college newspaper includes gossip about students.

Activity I: **Research Extension—Biography of Harold Lloyd**

Teacher's note: Very often, Harold Lloyd is compared to two other silent film stars of the period—Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Lloyd's on-screen persona differed greatly, however, from those of Chaplin and Keaton. Lloyd portrayed ordinary guys who face and ultimately overcome social and physical obstacles. To extend this teaching unit, teachers may wish to assign a research project, exploring in greater detail Harold Lloyd, the filmmaker.

- Explain the activity by displaying **PPT Slide 17: Extension—Student Research Activity**. The graphic provides four research strands relative to Harold Lloyd's career. Assign students to work in groups of four or five. Each group will select one of the topics to explore in more detail. Each group will prepare a report to present to the class. The report may include both print and visual material,

including moving images.

- Display **PPT Slides 18 - 21**. These slides provide research tips for each of the four topics. Review the discussion points below for each of these slides. The Harold Lloyd website, www.haroldlloyd.com, managed by the Harold Lloyd Estate and Trust, provides an excellent starting point for all four of the research strands indicated below.

Slide 18: Research Extension—The Man & the Media

Harold Lloyd made headlines, not only in the 1910s – 1930s but also more recently as present-day filmgoers have rediscovered his work. What did the media say about Lloyd *then*? How did photographs and movie posters portray him? What, if any, media attention does Harold Lloyd receive today? Search for news articles or online websites and blogs that focus on his career.

Slide 19: Research Extension—The Lloyd Cast of Characters

Harold Lloyd created a distinctive style and persona, very different than those of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton (other silent film stars of the 1920s). Why and how did he decide to have his character wear glasses? How did these glasses distinguish him from other actors of the time? Who was Lonesome Luke?

Slide 20: Research Extension—Physical Comedy and Stunts

Audiences were generally not aware of Harold Lloyd's physical disability. How did Harold injure his hand? How did his injury impact, if at all, his film career? When and why did he become known as “the king of daredevil comedy?” How were some of his stunts performed?

Slide 21: Research Extension--From Silents to Talkies

Did Harold Lloyd make a successful transition from silent films to “talkies”? What were some of his achievements later in the century? What effect did the Great Depression have on his career and the type of films he made?