

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How to get the most out of this curriculum**

#### ***What is the recommended age level?***

Not all of the selected films for study are appropriate for all grade levels. Within each module there are lessons suitable for upper elementary. Primarily, however, the films target middle and high school. The lessons are presented in such a way that teachers can select specific activities, adapting the materials to their classroom needs.

#### ***Must I screen and teach the entire film?***

Ideally, students would have time to screen a film in its entirety before commencing in-depth study. That said, the lessons are structured so that a single film is presented in segments. The Teacher's Guide recommends key points at which to stop the film and encourage student discussion. This reinforces the idea that watching the film is not intended for class entertainment. Rather, film study requires close observation of what is seen and heard on the screen. Students must make inferences to "read between the frames."

#### ***Are the modules cumulative? Must I begin with Module 1 before proceeding to Modules 2 and 3?***

In developing the framework for the curriculum, The Film Foundation followed a chronology of sorts. America is a nation of immigrants, and the first module addresses this aspect of nation building. Because immigrants were so often the backbone of the American labor force, the second module on labor was a logical progression. Similarly, the connection between labor and civil rights prompted Module 3's theme. Overall, however, each module is independent of the others and can be taught separately.

#### ***How much class time is required to teach a single chapter within a module?***

The scope and sequence of lessons cover narrative structure as well as the use of film language. Additionally, activities within each chapter provide historical context for the film. To complete a chapter typically requires one to two weeks. This, of course, is dependent upon the specific film and the students' existing knowledge and cinema literacy skills.

#### ***Are the feature films provided in the curriculum, or must these be purchased?***

The curriculum materials do not include every feature film. However, the films selected are readily available through online streaming services or library venues. Films that are not readily available are provided free of charge online as part of the curriculum.

#### ***What is the Portraits of America Module DVD?***

A number of activities use clips from films to illustrate key concepts. The supplemental clip reel is referred to in the Teacher's Guide as the Portraits of America Module DVD, which is provided free of charge online as part of the curriculum. The link to each clip reel is listed in the module's menu.

#### ***What is the Portraits of America Film Reader?***

Each module has its own Reader. The selections include both primary and secondary materials organized alphabetically. The Teacher's Guide references when to use a particular selection. Additional articles, not referenced specifically in the Teacher's Guide, are also included in the Reader.

#### ***What type of assessment is provided?***

Each chapter within a module includes a chapter test. The test covers three areas: reading the narrative text, reading film language, and reading the film as a historical/cultural document. A scene for analysis is provided for most of the chapter tests. Additionally, each module offers independent and group project ideas for assessment.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(continued)

***I have taught *The Story of Movies* previously. How does *Portraits of America* differ from the earlier curriculum units?***

The Story of Movies contains three core programs for study at the middle school level. These can be compared to a foundation course of study, introducing students to a film's narrative and the use of cinematic language. In the core units, a single film is studied in depth. In contrast, *Portraits of America* is a thematic curriculum and much larger in scope. Each module addresses a theme relative to the American democratic process, presenting multiple films for in-depth study.

***I am not a film teacher. What do I need to know about film study in order to guide my students in achieving cinema literacy?***

Teachers need not be experts in film or the filmmaking process in order to teach this curriculum. The teaching materials present overviews and background information to assist educators in facilitating discussions and presentations. The Teacher's Guide provides discussion questions as well as recommended student responses.

***What are the little symbols in the left margin of the Teacher's Guide?***

These icons indicate when to utilize the supplemental materials provided in the curriculum.



The PowerPoint slides include screening activity and discussion questions, movie stills, photographs, editorial cartoons, maps, paintings, and other visual imagery. The PowerPoint presentations can be downloaded, along with the Teacher's Guides, from the *Portraits of America* curriculum section of this website ([storyofmovies.org](http://storyofmovies.org)).



The Portraits of America Module DVDs contain clips from the feature films studied in depth, along with scenes from related films, for screening activities and analysis. Newsreels and rare footage from the earliest days of filmmaking are also found on these supplemental film clip reels, which can be streamed through the *Portraits of America* curriculum section of this website.



This symbol represents selections from the Portraits of America Film Reader, included with each module. PDFs of the articles, essays, and other primary source documents in each Reader can be downloaded from the *Portraits of America* curriculum section of this website.