READING, UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING
7. can read, understand and respond to a review

English Language Intensive Programme

Text Structure and Language Features: Example 2

Text Structure - Review

Context - includes background information on text e.g. author, type of work, setting and brief synopsis

Text description - describes main character/s, their relationships and key incidents

Judgement - includes opinion and/or recommendation

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO AND JULIET – A REVIEW

The film 'William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet' has been adapted and directed by Baz Luhrmann for film from the play 'Romeo and Juliet' written by William Shakespeare. The original play was set in Verona, Italy, in the 1400s, but Luhrmann has modernised the setting to 'Verona Beach'. This is a film set which reflects the very religious and vibrant, lively and exciting but violent atmosphere of Mexico City. This film, released in 1996, centres on the tension between two gangs, the Montagues and the Capulets. It follows the tragic results of the developing friendship between the two main characters, Romeo and Juliet, who are from rival gang families.

Juliet Capulet is an innocent, romantic girl of fourteen who falls deeply in love with Romeo when she meets him at a party. Her parents have arranged for her to marry Paris, but she refuses to follow their orders after she meets and arranges to secretly marry Romeo Montague. Romeo has had other girlfriends, but having fallen in love with Juliet he forgets all the others. Unfortunately all other members of the Montague and Capulet families hate each other, so the couple know they will have to keep their marriage secret until they can persuade both families to accept it. Before they can do this, Romeo kills one of the Capulets in a gang fight and is forced to leave Verona. He and Juliet try to arrange to leave together, but their messages miss one another and both think the other is dead, and both kill themselves. Only then do their families realise the terrible consequences of their hatred for each other. It's a real teenage tragedy.

Luhrmann makes his version of the play appeal to young people by using a number of different visual and audio effects. The characters in the two gangs have a special style of dressing which creates a different image for each gang. In addition, they are given a feeling of being "cool" by carrying guns and doing drugs, both things which fascinate teenage audiences.

Two more techniques which make the film interesting are the music and the camera shots. The music chosen for the sound track is modern, so this makes the film seem relevant to young people. The fast cuts within and between scenes make the film dramatic and keep up the pace of the story. One example of this is when the two gangs are fighting and Mercutio is killed.

Luhrmann also keeps including different images of water as a visual theme of the film, e.g. when Romeo and Juliet meet at the party they see each other through a fish tank, which makes the meeting seem mysterious and glamorous. He also makes it appeal to teenagers by choosing two popular actors as the leads, Clare Danes as Juliet and Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo.

This is a very enjoyable film for young people and can make us able to appreciate and understand a play which was written in Elizabethan English hundreds of years ago.

Language Features

Use of present tense; past tense if work has a historical setting – may or may not use temporal sequence of events when relating key incidents

Use of relating verbs, e.g. This is a film set which reflects the very religious and vibrant, lively and exciting but violent atmosphere of Mexico City.

Use of action verbs, e.g. marry, kill

Use of feeling verbs, e.g. feels, falls in love

Use of passive voice, e.g. was written, is set

Use of modality, e.g. can make us able to appreciate

Use of technical language, e.g. play, Elizabethan, fast cuts

Use of adjectives, e.g. tragic, violent

Use of detailed noun groups, e.g. a special style of dressing which creates a different image for each gang.

Use of evaluation language, e.g. enjoyable, exciting, effective, glamorous

Use of persuasive language in judgement, e.g. particularly, suitable, interesting, relevant, entertaining

Use of compound and complex sentences