

Brief synopsis of the film

Volver (Pedro Almodóvar, 2006) tells the story of Raimunda, a young unemployed mother with a husband and a daughter in mid-adolescence. Since childhood she has kept a dark secret.

All the characters in this story are women who struggle to survive, even the grandmother's ghost.

A rural story, which takes Almodóvar back to his childhood, to his people, to La Mancha, and especially its humble, brave and strong women.

Almodóvar wrote Volver as “the story of three generations who survive the east wind (el viento Solano), fire, insanity, superstition and even death by means of goodness, lies and boundless vitality”. It seems that death is highlighted throughout in Volver. Death is assumed with great normality, expected and it even seems to be longed for. However, the film presents different points of view about it. Throughout the film there are up to five different plots, all revolving around the theme of death.

	Description of activity and suggested uses	Skills covered
Activity 1	Listening activity. Students taught skills of close listening to assess mood – it also allows them to become familiar with and practise key single lexical items for describing mood.	Students listen to sound files and match up to the correct character while thinking about the mood that is conveyed. This could be done individually at a computer or as a class activity. Follow up work could be done where students discuss the significance of the mood in relation to the character and be encouraged to find other examples from the film.

<p>Activity 2</p>	<p>This activity builds on the first one as reading skills will be developed, as well as enhanced understanding of key scenes. This gives students key essay phrases to describe the ambiance rather than just single lexical items.</p>	<p>Students watch a series of video clips and read post it notes which describe the ambiance and mood in each of the clips. They must then drag and drop the post it notes to the right clip. Used as a starter activity this could introduce students to extended descriptions of mood before they go on to apply similar descriptions to clips of the film they are studying.</p>
<p>Activity 3</p>	<p>This activity is to develop summary writing skills. Students are encouraged to watch a clip and write notes that they will use to write a more detailed summary. The against the clock idea is to encourage students to write succinctly but effectively.</p>	<p>This is an easy activity to adapt to any film. Teachers could copy the idea by choosing a clip from the film they are studying and giving students two minutes to write a summary of what they have seen. In this activity, they need to focus specifically on the moods of the different characters. The timing element can be used to set a personal challenge if working individually and if at first they find it difficult it can be repeated (either in the same lesson or at a later date) with the aim of improvement. It could also be used in a competitive way in pairs or 'beat the teacher' with the teacher providing a model answer but with the same time constraint (or less time!)</p>