

Mustang

(2015, Deniz Gamze Ergüven , France / Turkey)

Component 2: Global Filmmaking Perspectives (AL)

Component 2: European Film (AS)

Core Study Areas: Key Elements of Film Form Meaning & Response The Contexts of Film

Rationale for study

Choosing *Mustang* offers opportunities to explore cultural, stylistic and cinematic diversity and a film directed by a woman. It presents thematic links in the AS/ AL specification with other films from both Component 1 and Component 2 which explore representations of gender, growing up, identity and youth.

STARTING POINTS - Useful Sequences and timings/links

‘Splashing in the sea’ and ‘Grandma’s reaction’ : 2:16-6:14

‘Going to the football match’/ ‘Off-limits to men’: 28:17-31.00

CORE STUDY AREAS 1 - STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

Cinematography (including lighting)

- Wide-shots to represent the girls’ freedom, innocence and care-free moments after school. The wide-shots of the girls and boys splashing in the water capture the expanse of the sea (the Black Sea) and the rural back-drop of the mountains, reinforcing the idea of freedom and space within the natural environment.
- Framing: some shots cut out the horizon and frame the boundless sea. The infinite sea contrasts with the girls’ forbidden freedom at home, within their culture and community.

- Zooming out enhances the sense of space/ freedom.
- Natural daylight is effective. The sun’s rays are reflected in the water and the young people’s shadows are also reflected there-adding to the realism and spontaneity of the moment. The use of natural lighting further enhances the idea that the girls’ behaviour (to be reprimanded later) is out in the open.
- POV shot when the sisters hail down a car and catch a ride on the bus taking other women to the football match.
- Movement in the car as they travel on the open road (this shot is repeated in the closing sequence when Nur and Lale escape the village, in the same car). The film captures the girls’ restlessness and thus movement and stillness are in conflict.
- In contrast with Sequence 1, the close-up shots at the football stadium capture the five sisters in a crowd, framing them together as they express their freedom and excitement.
- The shaky camera work reinforces the vibes and atmosphere of the football match.
- Composition and framing capture the all-female football crowd (the match is ‘off limits’ to men as they invaded the pitch in a previous match).
- E.C.U shots focus on sisters’ enjoyment of the match, whilst enabling the spectator to feel that they are also there.
- Cutaways to the aunt and her friend back in the village seeing the girls on television (it is a live match) capture the excitement of the match, whilst building tension and danger if the girls are seen and found out by their uncle and his friends.
- Zoom in on Lale. The lighting on her face singles her out and foreshadows what happens in the closing sequence. The film is narrated from her POV.
- Aunt Emine intentionally breaks the electricity cable in the village and creates a power cut- suggesting that the uncle is ‘in the dark’ regarding the sisters’ absence

from home, whilst he and his friends cannot view the match on television.

Mise-en-Scène

- The camera frames the five sisters and five boys giving a sense of symmetry and balance to the shot and ensuring they are all within the frame, whilst this interaction will be the reason they are scolded by their grandmother later.
- The boys and girls wear their school uniform, capturing the sense of discipline and authority suggested by the uniform, whilst they remove ties and sweaters to indicate their longing for fun and rebellion, as they splash in the sea.
- The sea's strong blue shades are prominent, whilst the rural backdrop is captured through its shades of green.
- Vibrant colours – red, orange and yellow enhance the boldness of the girls' actions and bring the sequence alive.
- The wildness of the match atmosphere is captured through the clothing and football paraphernalia such as the scarves and make-up.
- The bold colours make the sisters stand out when captured on television – back at home reinforcing the boldness of their actions.

Editing

- The pace of this sequence is steady, even when the young people start splashing and playing in the sea.
- The choice of long takes enables the spectator to explore their reactions and movements suggesting that they are unaware of the consequences of their actions, or the subsequent reactions of their grandmother and uncle.
- In contrast with the 'splashing in the sea' sequence, this sequence has a fast pace. The football match is an exhilarating and forbidden experience for girls. The fast pace enhances the spectators' responses. Quick cuts between their village and the football crowd create a sense of the two spaces, the wild freedom of the open at the stadium and the liminal space of the home, as well as build tension and suspense as the spectator follows the grandmother's and other women's reactions in the village.

Sound

- Diegetic sounds of sisters and boys, laughing and screaming add a sense of authenticity and enhance the notion of youth, freedom and spontaneity.
- Overlapping sounds of the breeze, the sea and

the waves as they splash and fool around.

- Diegetic sounds of characters' playfulness complements natural sounds and lends a strong sense of place and location; their sounds are 'tactile', adding to the realism of this sequence.
- Diegetic sound of the music playing on the coach highlights the women's excitement and anticipation.
- Diegetic sounds of sisters and other women at the football match cheering and shouting reinforces their freedom in the open space.

CORE STUDY AREAS 2 - STARTING POINTS – Meaning & Response

Representations - Youth/Gender

- Consider how *Mustang* represents gender roles in contemporary Turkey. How does the film portray the role of young women like the five orphaned sisters within their family and immediate community?
- Consider the role of the uncle in the sisters' life and the extent to which his views and actions represent prevailing patriarchal values and norms in contemporary Turkish society.
- Why do the grandmother, the aunty and the older females enforce these male-dominated values and attitudes?
- Consider the grandmother's reaction when the girls come from home school, she claims that 'everyone's talking about [their] obscene behaviour', whilst in her view they were 'pleasuring themselves' as their bodies touched the boys' necks. What does this response suggest about female identity and male-dominated attitudes towards women and their sexuality?
- How are public and private spaces represented in the film in relation to male and female roles? Why might the public space of the sea and then the football stadium represent forbidden spaces which the sisters have entered?
- Consider the space of the family home in relation to conservative and male-dominated views about the role of women and their opportunities in Turkish society (Lale narrates how their house became a 'wife-factory' after they were forbidden from going out).
- The uncle keeps adding bars to the house windows, thus suggesting the sisters' incarceration. What further meanings does the film examine through the imagery of the bars?
- Later their grandmother wants to take the

girls out in public 'for a lemonade' as though to prove the girls' purity and virginity to the local community. How does this decision link to notions of female honour which are represented throughout the film?

Aesthetics (i.e. the 'look and feel' of the film including visual style, influences, auteur, motifs)

- *Mustang* is filmed in a remote village in Anatolia. Discuss the effectiveness of the real locations to the aesthetic 'look' of the film. What does the use of natural lighting add to the film's authenticity and realism?
- 'Mustang' means 'wild horse'. How does the idea of freedom and wildness become a powerful and ironic motif in the film?
- How does the new clothing made by the grandmother, suggest the new role and identity for the five sisters?
- Deniz Gamze Ergüven comments on the extent to which the film *Escape from Alcatraz* influenced her thinking around the film's theme of the girls' entrapment and longing for escape. How effectively do the bars on the house windows convey the image of the girls' entrapment?
- Film critics have commented on the similarities between *Mustang* and Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* (2000).
- The sinister underlying themes of male abuse and power (the uncle sexually abuses the elder sisters) contributes to the film's intensity and claustrophobic atmosphere. This is also the case with the film *Miss Violence* (Alexandros Avranas, Greece, 2013).

CORE STUDY AREAS 3 - STARTING POINTS - Contexts

Social

- How does the grandmother's response after the sisters' splashing in the sea represent conservative attitudes about the role of young women with reference to notions of 'shame' and 'honour'?
- Marriage is portrayed as an important social tradition and ritual which defines women's role. Consider, within the film's portrayal of male-dominated values how the sisters' virginity plays a key part in their marriage value (discuss the sequence of the 'virginity test' and the incident after Selma's wedding night: 'when I say I am a virgin, no-one believes me')
- What do rituals, traditions, arranged marriage and preparations for being a wife say about the expected roles and identity of women in contemporary Turkey?
- Current debates in Turkish society are polarised regarding the position of women, with governments adopting a reactionary stance.

Historical

- Liberals continue to campaign for the rights of women in contemporary Turkey in the face of conservative views about their role.
- Government response to an incident of male rape in February 2015, was to blame woman/victim for going out alone in public. This led to wide protests against this incident, women's rights and the issue of race in Ankara.
- *Mustang* explores the values of a closed and remote village up against the perceived progressive values of a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul (where Lale and Nur end up).