

## *FILM SCRIPTS ONLINE*

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### **Introduction**

It goes without saying that the English language we teach by means of textbooks and their components is largely an idealised form of the language. When it comes to real life encounters, it transpires, English is not that 'well-structured'. Grammatical rules 'collapse', accents become 'unfamiliar and funny', vocabulary seems far less 'innocent'. Confronted with native English speakers in their environment, students suddenly come to realise that this is not exactly the type of English they have been taught in school. In order to save students from such shocks, teachers cannot rely solely on textbooks. Students should be exposed to real-life language, such as the one found in songs or films, full of verbal extremes, where archaism occurs alongside new coinage, formality next door to slang, etc. Famous masterpieces like 'Braveheart', 'Gangs of New York', 'Pearl Harbour', 'A Beautiful Mind' 'Elizabeth I', 'Shakespeare in Love', '8 Mile', 'Ali G Indahouse', etc. bristle with all kinds of accents and dialects, archaic vocabulary, scientific language, and specialised military expressions. And, most importantly, they feature slang binding together members of a subculture.

Let's face the truth, this is the real-life English to be taught. Otherwise, our best students will never be able to understand English lyrics or go to the cinema and watch English films without having to read subtitles. And sadly enough, they will have difficulty communicating in English speaking countries.

**Level:** Pre-intermediate ('A Beautiful Mind' - based activity)

Advanced/Proficiency ('Shakespeare In Love' - based activity)

**Time:** 45 minutes or more (depending on the number of activities covered)

### **Aims:**

- to make students aware of the learning potential of the Internet

- to make students aware of film being an extremely powerful language learning tool encompassing infinite libraries of authentic spoken English in the form that can hardly be met in textbooks or elsewhere
- to present ways of finding film transcripts for educational purposes
- to introduce new expressions (contextualised in films)

**Technical requirements:** One computer per student or two students, connected to the Internet

**Other resources used:** Overhead projector, websites, television set, video player, video, cassettes with the original versions of the films 'A Beautiful Mind' and 'Shakespeare In Love'

**Knowledge:** Students should be skilled at typing the URLs, using search engines, downloading text files as well as opening them; they may have to be able to extract files in order to read them

**Necessary preparation:** Teacher must make sure that all the computers are correctly networked and have access to the Internet. It is highly advisable that the computers have software to decompress \*.rar, and \*zip packed files. The free software can be easily downloaded from Internet at, e.g: <http://www.underpl.org>

### **Possible problems:**

Teacher should control and facilitate the searching process. Some students may have problems defining the relevant search criteria as well as extracting and opening the downloaded files. Pre-intermediate students are more than likely to have difficulty in understanding technical instructions in English; thus their mother tongue is preferable at some stages of the lesson.

### **Procedure:**

#### Pre-stage (offline)

1. Teacher asks students if they watched the film 'A Beautiful Mind' and what they can remember about its storyline, characters, etc.
2. Teacher tells students they are going to watch a five-minute extract [ 01:35:15 - 01:40:49 ] from that film, involving Russell Crowe (as *John Nash*), Jennifer Connelly (as *Alicia Nash*) and Christopher Plummer (as *Dr Rosen*).

In order to check how well students understood the piece, teacher may ask simple questions, e.g.: *Why did John stop taking his medicine?* or *What can John do best?*

The full list of questions prepared by the teacher should preferably be displayed with an overhead projector. Most students are likely to be able to answer suchlike questions after the first watching. It is expected, however, that they will have problems with more detailed understanding

of the scene. When it comes to more difficult questions, they might not be able to answer, e.g.:  
*What kind of therapy does Dr Rosen suggest? What does he say about schizophrenia? According to Dr Rosen, how can you not treat schizophrenia?*

At this point, such questions should stay unanswered until later in the lesson.

3. As students watch the scene again (and yet again, if needed), they will be asked to complete the missing sentences (MS Word file) in the following piece, the copies of which are distributed.

#### While-stage (online)

4. Teacher suggests self-checking. The following list of web sites is put forward:

<http://dvd.box.sk>; <http://divxstation.com/subtitles.asp>; <http://hot.ee/subland>;  
<http://divxsubtitles.net>; <http://subtitles.cz>

Note! These are some of the largest sites devised to find subtitles for DivX, DVD and VCD movies. They offer free downloading (and uploading) of thousands of subtitles in all the world's languages, which are recorded as text files (\*.txt; \*.sub; \*.srt). Files of the foregoing extensions can easily be opened by means of word processors such as Microsoft Word, as well as other popular software, e.g. Windows Notepad, Windows Commander, Total Commander, etc. Although watching films in the form of DivX's is a very popular type of entertainment with students, they are highly unlikely to look for English transcripts of the films they watch. Therefore, it is advisable the teacher lead the students through the search process to give them example.

Teacher asks students to enter the first of the presented sites and type '*beautiful mind*' in its search engine. On finding the relevant files, the search should be narrowed down to '*English*'. From among the list of files found, it is recommended students should download the one contributed by *ALXEMI*. (Note: You need to be selective when it comes to picking out files with film subtitles. Some files may provide inaccurate subtitles; thus it is advisable to check them out before use). After unpacking it, we will receive the following text file: *ingles.srt*, with the subtitles in request. In order to check their exercise, students should find the fragment of the given the time frame ( 01:35:15 - 01:40:49 ). Here's part of the extract they need:

1239

01:35:15,800 --> 01:35:17,319

You see them now?

1240

01:35:26,199 --> 01:35:27,840

Yes.

1241

01:35:30,039 --> 01:35:32,239

Why did you stop your meds?

1242

01:35 :34,399 --> 01:35 :36,640

**Because I couldn't do my work.**

1243

01:35 :36,720 --> 01:35 :38,560

I couldn't help with the baby.

1244

01:35 :38,640 --> 01:35 :40,319

I couldn't-

1245

01:35 :41,760 --> 01:35 :43,880

I couldn't respond to my wife.

(.....)

1285

01:39 :34,840 --> 01:39 :38,199

Rosen said to call if you try and kill me or anything.

1286

01:39 :53,880 --> 01:39 :56,079

You want to know what's real?

1287

01:40:01,319 --> 01:40:03,199

This.

1288

01:40:10,199 --> 01:40:12,079

This.

1289

01:40:17,159 --> 01:40:19,000

This.

1290

01:40:20,359 --> 01:40:22,439

**This is real.**

1291

01:40:25,640 --> 01:40:27,920

Maybe the part...

1292

01:40:28,000 --> 01:40:30,279

that knows the waking from the dream,

1293

01:40:31,640 --> 01:40 :33,479

maybe it isn't here.

1294

01:40 :37,199 --> 01:40 :39,560

Maybe it's here.

1295

01:40 :44,039 --> 01:40 :46,279

**I need to believe...**

1296

01:40 :46,359 --> 01:40 :49,640

**that something extraordinary is possible.**

Note! After the students compared their completed sentences with the above script, they may want to watch this emotional scene again.

5. For better understanding of the scene, students are encouraged to check out the expressions they may not understand, e.g. *meds*, *respond to (someone)*, *a run of insulin shocks*, *degenerative*, *come up with a formula*, *apply your mind*, *theorem*, *work it out*, *commitment papers*, *figure out*, *know the waking from the dream*, etc. Online dictionaries might be of some help here. They can be found at the following sites: [www.translate.pl](http://www.translate.pl), [www.slownik.angielski.edu.pl](http://www.slownik.angielski.edu.pl) (English-Polish ones), [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), <http://dictionary.cambridge.org> (English-only). Alternatively, students can download a file with Polish subtitles for 'A Beautiful Mind' and check out the translation of the scene in question. The largest databases with film subtitles in Polish can be found at: [www.napisy.info](http://www.napisy.info), [www.napisy.org](http://www.napisy.org)

#### Post-stage (offline)

6. Given the transcript and its translations, it will be far easier for students to answer the detailed questions which were posed just after the first watching (see off-line pre-stage, point 2). A class of advanced students may be assigned a more difficult task to do, such as the one presented below.

#### **Procedure:**

##### Pre-stage (offline)

1. Teacher asks students what they can remember about the film 'Shakespeare in Love', a romantic comedy, which won Academy Awards for Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, Best Picture, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, Best Score and Best Original Screenplay. Alternatively, as an introduction to the film itself, students may be asked some true/false questions about the famous playwright, William Shakespeare, e.g.

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Shakespeare was born in London .   | 1. No, Stratford-upon-Avon |
| 2. His famous words 'To be or not to be' come from 'Macbeth'.               | 2. No, Hamlet              |
| 3. He was 18 when he got married and his wife was 25.                       | 3. Yes                     |
| 4. He spent about 25 years in London .                                      | 4. Yes                     |
| 5. He died at the age of 52 on his birthday.                                | 5. Yes                     |
| 6. William had seven brothers and sisters.                                  | 6. Yes                     |
| 7. Shakespeare's parents were poor.   | 7. No, they were rich.     |
| 8. Shakespeare built his theatre, the Globe, which could hold 3,000 people. | 8. Yes.                    |

For comfort, the quiz could be displayed with an overhead projector. Students can be divided into two teams and given a time limit of 3 minutes for answers.

2. Teacher tells students they are going to watch a three-minute extract (00:36:15 - 00:39:04) from the film 'Shakespeare in Love' involving Gwyneth Paltrow (as *Viola De Lesseps*), Colin Firth (as *Lord Wessex*) and Imelda Staunton (as *Nurse*). As they watch the scene, they are asked to complete the missing expressions in the [following transcript](#) (MS Word file), the copies of which are distributed:

It is purposefully expected that students will find it difficult to complete all the gaps correctly as the missing phrases include such advanced expressions as *civility*, *beseech*, *requisite*, *buds*, *piety*, etc.

While-stage (on-line)

3. Teacher informs students that when they watch non-dubbed/subtitled films in their original versions, they are likely to find them difficult to understand. In order to clarify things, they can take advantage of the scripts available on the Net, for almost any film wanted.

Following the same procedure as presented for the scene from 'A Beautiful Mind' (see: online stage, point 3 above), students should enter <http://dvd.box.sk> and download a recommended text file contributed by SYMBOLMAN. (Note: Files contributed by other authors might contain inaccurate subtitles. If you decide to use other subtitles files, make sure they are right). On opening the file (*Shakespeare in love\_ENG.srt*) they will easily find the extract they need (time frame: 00:36:15 - 00:39:04), which will look like this:

533

00:36:15,994 --> 00:36:18,554

For Lady Viola De Lesseps,

534

00:36:18,634 --> 00:36:22,388

by the hand of Thomas Kent.

535

00:36:22,474 --> 00:36:25,113

"Shall I compare thee

to a summer's day ?

536

00:36:25,194 --> 00:36:28,504

**Thou art** more lovely

and more temperate.

537

00:36:31,154 --> 00:36 :33,952



Rough winds do shake

the **darling buds** of May--"

(.....)

580

00:38 :47,554 --> 00:38 :52,105

"Master Will, poet dearest to my heart,

581

00:38 :52,194 --> 00:38 :55,948

I **beseech** you

**banish** me from yours.

582

00:38 :56,034 --> 00:38 :59,151

I am to marry Lord Wessex .

583

00:39:00,194 --> 00:39:02,503

A daughter's duty...

584

00:39:02,594 --> 00:39:04,903

and the queen's command."

Given the file, students can check out the missing phrases in their transcripts. It is recommended that the unknown phrases be explained. At this stage students may want to watch the scene again to get the new expressions contextualised.

Apart from the 'subtitles servers', such as <http://dvd.box.sk>, there are also special 'scripts servers', which store full film scripts to be used for educational purposes. Some of the largest

selections can be found at: <http://www.freemoviescripts.com>;  
<http://www.moviefreak.com/scripts/index.htm>; <http://www.rosebud.com.br/scripts.htm>;  
<http://www.script-o-rama.com/filmtranscripts.shtml>; <http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html>;  
<http://www.joblo.com/moviescripts.htm>; [http://www.movie-page.com/movie\\_scripts.htm](http://www.movie-page.com/movie_scripts.htm). There  
you will find a variety of movie scripts, ranging from old to recent movies. Advanced students  
can have fun reading them aloud or acting them out in drama classes.

The Internet is also an ocean of ‘film review sites’, recommended for students with a good  
command of English, where they can find all kinds of information about the films they are  
interested in. Below are listed some of the best ‘film web pages’ in English:

<http://www.culturevulture.net/Movies/MovieIndex.htm>;  
<http://www.crazy4cinema.com/Review/review.html>; <http://www.dvdverdict.com/reviews>;  
<http://www.filmhead.com/reviews/index.html>; <http://www.filmthreat.com/Reviews.asp>;  
<http://www.iofilm.co.uk>; <http://www.rinkworks.com/movies/search.shtml>;  
[http://www.screenit.com/search\\_movies.html](http://www.screenit.com/search_movies.html); <http://www.thezreview.co.uk/reviews.htm>;  
<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/entertainment/film/reviews>.

## **Conclusion**

As can be seen, the World Wide Web offers databases with transcripts of virtually any film in  
English. The scripts are there to be used for all kinds of purposes, including educational. Without  
doubt, ‘film analysis’ is a great combination of entertainment and learning. The video courses  
available for EFL students will never be as attractive and authentic as films such as ‘A Beautiful  
Mind’ or ‘Shakespeare in Love’. Since ELT publishers cannot afford the copyrights of films like  
that, they are looking for cheaper productions. However, what cannot be escaped is that with so  
many students having Internet-connected computers at home, the popularity of DivX’s is  
growing fast. In point of actual fact, DivX’s have become as popular as MP3 music, and students  
watch thousands of films on their computers, most of them being in English. Why not make them  
aware of the educational opportunities it creates? There is so much new language to be picked up  
through this medium, the language which is not exactly as ideal as the one in coursebooks from  
which they are taught.