

Tips for Course Use

Many contemporary German films have achieved worldwide recognition. Such films as Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt*, Caroline Link's *Nirgendwo in Afrika*, and Wolfgang Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!* have become popular vehicles for approaching Germany's language and culture, and instructors of German are increasingly incorporating modern German cinema into their curricula. With this trend in mind and following the example set by Antonello Borra and Cristina Pausini in *Italian Through Film*, we have created *German Through Film* as a flexible tool for teachers who strive toward content-based instruction and believe that learning a language should be entertaining as well as meaningful.

German Through Film focuses on contemporary German films that are commonly found in school and university video libraries and can easily be rented from a video store. The book is an adaptable ancillary text geared toward high school and college instruction as well as adult education. Because the exercises range from the elementary to the sophisticated, the text is suitable for beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners of German. In order to complete each chapter, however, students need to be above the beginner's level. At the intermediate level, *German Through Film* can be used as a primary text with the integration of an appropriate grammar apparatus and a selection of reading materials.

Each of the eight chapters in *German Through Film* is devoted to one film. The movies are presented in chronological order and present material of varying difficulty and complexity. The stars next to the titles in the table of contents indicate the degree of difficulty, from * (easiest) to **** (most sophisticated), with *Good Bye, Lenin!* being the most complex. Teachers may pick and choose which films they wish to include in their syllabus at any level or stage of language instruction. The material in each chapter is geared toward an "extensive" reading or global viewing of the film. Instructors who would like to pursue certain cultural or linguistic aspects of the movie in the classroom, however, will find many opportunities for an "intensive" reading of scenes of their own choosing.

Structure of the Book

Vorweg

A short test gives the students an idea of their knowledge about German movies before they start using this book. The Vocabulary List in this introductory section offers the essential film vocabulary. It should quickly become part of the active vocabulary of any student working with *German Through Film*. We kept the list essential so as to encourage the students to really *learn* this vocabulary, not simply use it for reference. We also included a list of helpful discursive phrases for building arguments and tips on developing stylistic competence.

Features of Each Chapter

1. *Activities Before Viewing the Film*

Opening sections provide information about the movie (“Der Film”), the plot (“Die Handlung”) and socio-cultural issues specific to the film (“Hintergrundinformationen”).

General questions (“Zum Einstieg”) introduce the main themes of the film, eliciting students’ curiosity and setting their expectations.

A vocabulary list (“Wortschatz”) and vocabulary exercises give students a solid foundation for learning key words and expressions before watching the film. Most chapters also have lists of specialized vocabulary that’s not meant to be memorized (for example “Typisch Deutsch,” “Typisch DDR,” “Typisch Wiedervereinigung,” “Typisch Nazideutschland”). Students will easily recognize and remember the words from the “Wortschatz” when they hear them again in context and with the support of images. We also recommend the use of a good dictionary.

2. *Activities While Viewing and After Viewing the Film*

These activities are presented in order of increasing complexity. They range from the purely closed true or false (“Richtig oder falsch?”) and multiple choice (“Wählen Sie die richtige Antwort aus”) formats to a question-and-answer format in which students must supply a discrete-point response (“Beantworten Sie folgende Fragen”) and attribute phrases from the movie to the single characters (“Wer sagt im Film zu wem die

folgenden Sätze?“) or put sentences and acts from the movie into the right order (“Bringen Sie . . . in die richtige Reihenfolge”). These exercises are designed not only to help students grasp specific facts about the film but to give them a more global comprehension of the movie’s content and characters. Note that a lot of those exercises are based on the entire movie rather than on individual scenes.

3. *Activities After Viewing the Film*

Guided expansion exercises offer a transition between the mere comprehension of the film and its interpretation. These activities range from the description of characters and their relationships (“Die Figuren und ihre Beziehungen”) to the description of selected scenes, the description or appreciation of the music and/or cinematographic aspects, the concentration on single cultural aspects or the creation of alternative dialogues and/or endings for the film.

Interpretative and creative activities may be directed toward either oral discussion or written assignments, in order to elicit students’ cultural and historical reflections and foster their personal reactions. At this stage students can engage in class discussions or presentations (“Weiterführende Fragen für die Diskussion” and “Themen für ein Referat”), and then produce written compositions or research papers (“Weiterführende Fragen für die schriftliche Hausaufgabe” and “Themen für eine Hausarbeit”). In the exercises in the “Jetzt sind Sie dran” section, students are asked to recreate a scene, (re)write a dialogue drilling pronunciation and intonation, and act it out or film it.

Each chapter ends with Internet-based activities, which expand on elements from the movie. Exploring German Web sites with a search engine is fun and motivating for many students.

Zuletzt

In this summary section (“Zusammenfassung”) students will find questions that help compare and summarize the movies presented in the book and that follow up and expand on topics introduced in the chapters. Furthermore, there is a short history of postwar cinema in Germany (“Film in Deutschland nach 1945”) to help place the movies analyzed in a wider context and also learn something about preceding periods of German film history.

Answer keys for each chapter are provided in the online Instructor's Manual.

We hope that you will find *German Through Film* to be a useful tool for promoting the understanding of German language and culture. We would love to hear from students and colleagues and would greatly appreciate suggestions for improvements and comments. Enjoy the movies!

Sample Lesson Plan

Ideally, one should allow six classes for each chapter.

Day 1: In class, read the information given in the opening sections, making sure the students understand the material. Introduce the new vocabulary with the related exercises, and cover the “Zum Einstieg” questions. For homework, assign the viewing of the film and the “Richtig oder falsch” and “Wählen Sie die richtige Antwort aus” sections. Make sure the students understand the homework questions.

Day 2: In class, have students compare their homework in pairs. Double-check with the whole class and then go over the “Beantworten Sie folgende Fragen” section. Since this section is usually quite long, you may divide it among the students and have small groups work on individual parts. Ask each group to report and discuss everyone's results with the whole class. Go over the “Wer sagt im Film zu wem die folgenden Sätze?” section with the whole class. Assign any remaining exercises of the “Während und/oder nach dem Film” section as homework for the next class. If there are too many exercises, divide the class into several groups.

Day 3: Review the homework, then move on to the expansion activities (replaying one or more sequences of the movie as needed). Have students work in pairs or in groups on “Die Figuren und ihre Beziehungen.” Again, you may want to divide the class into small groups to work on parts of the section. Ask students to take notes so that they can report their answers to the whole class. Discuss everyone's results with the rest of the class. Encourage them to express disagreement and/or different opinions. Assign any remaining exercise before the “Weiterführende Fragen für die Diskussion” for homework. If there are too many exercises, divide the class into several groups.

Day 4: Ask students to share the results of their homework with one another and with you. Move on to the “Weiterführende Fragen für die

Diskussion.” Encourage students to use the discursive phrases listed in “Vorweg.” Move on to the “Jetzt sind Sie dran” section. Assign whatever can be done without further preparation in class. Have students decide whether they want to work on an expanded project. Assign one of the “Weiterführende Fragen für die schriftliche Hausaufgabe” and/or “Themen für ein Referat oder eine Hausarbeit” for homework. If possible, assign each question to at least one student.

Day 5: Ask students to give their presentation to the class. Students must take notes and then ask questions during a question-and-answer period. Collect students’ compositions for correction and grading. (You may of course want to give them more time for completing them.) You may also create a folder where everyone’s compositions are collected for every student to read. Assign an Internet-based activity for homework. If possible, assign each question to at least one student.

Day 6: Ask students to share the results of their homework with one another and with you. If the class has chosen to work on a project of the “Jetzt sind Sie dran” section offer help and correct the pronunciation, provide additional vocabulary, and check on the work in progress of every group. Finally do a brainstorming closing section, reviewing with the whole class the most important results from the work on the movie.