

Introduction

After the success of our earlier volume, *Italian Through Film*, we realized the need for a similar yet more comprehensive and versatile book. Ranging from 1945 to 1981, *Italian Through Film: The Classics* covers more than thirty years of Italian cinematography including internationally renowned movies such as Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* and Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief*.

Because our wish was to introduce students to the widest possible number of directors as well as to have them work with some of the classics of Italian moviemaking, we had to make some hard choices. For example, each director is featured only once, with a movie that is not necessarily the most famous or the most representative. Because of the limited number of chapters, we had to find a balance between our pedagogical goals as teachers and our preferences as film lovers. The movies that are included have been for the most part recently reprinted in DVD format, either in Italy or in the United States, sometimes in both. Only one of them, Dino Risi's *The Easy Life*, has not yet been re-released in either country at the time that this book is being printed. In spite of that, along with all of the others, it can be found in VHS format in most university libraries.

Italian Through Film: The Classics is a textbook slightly different than its predecessor. Conceived with a chronological, non-thematic approach, it is meant to be extremely flexible so as to encourage instructors to design their own cinema-based courses. The book is also addressed to a slightly different audience. Although it can still be used as an ancillary tool by college students at the higher beginning–lower intermediate level, it is actually the ideal textbook for a fifth or a sixth semester content-based college course. It offers ample material to abundantly cover alone

a standard fifteen-week-course, independently of the reading resources suggested in the bibliographies. However, it could also easily be used over two semesters, in association with (or even in absence of) a reader chosen by the individual instructor.

The book is organized around fifteen masterworks of Italian postwar cinematography. Each chapter is devoted to one film and requires a minimum of three fifty-minute classes per week, in order to be sufficiently reviewed. For instructors who decide to use the book for one semester, each of the chapters offers a wide range of activities and teaching suggestions allowing them the option to concentrate only on some of the movies. Instead, other films might be assigned as individual student projects. Each of the fifteen chapters is comprised of a richer array of pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing exercises, Internet-based tasks, and, new to this edition, a reading section featuring a signature piece in context with the themes presented in the film.

The introductory chapter “Tanto per cominciare,” another new feature of the book, will familiarize students with the essential vocabulary to talk about film and will refresh the most common structures used in expressing opinions. In a similar way, the closing chapter “Per concludere,” to be used towards the end of the semester, fosters class discussion based on comparisons between the movies studied and some specific cultural aspects encountered.

The “Bibliografie per saperne di più” section is designed for instructors using the book in more advanced classes who would like their students to embark on individual research projects by referring to specific, book-based activities and sources, which can be easily assessed and monitored.

At the beginning of the semester each student can be assigned a major, independent project (which could well be integrated by multimedia), requiring the reading of one (or more, depending on the class level) of the monographs on the various directors or the histories of cinema and Italian culture. Throughout the semester, the student will be responsible for retrieving the book (through interlibrary loan, if necessary), reading it (in parts or in its entirety) with the help of a good dictionary, and consulting with the instructor. Towards the end of the semester the project will be presented to the rest of the class. Alternatively, these projects can be organized as group work: One student will report on a director’s biography, a second one on the director’s works, a third one on relevant cultural aspects or on the contemporary history of Italian cinema.

Sample Lesson Plan for a Three-Day Week

First day. In class, cover the vocabulary with related exercises, the “Locandina” and “Prima della visione” questions. Verify comprehension of the information about the director, the movie, and the cultural highlights that you will already have assigned as homework for the class. As part of the next homework, assign the viewing of the film along with the sections “Vero o falso?,” “Scelta multipla,” and/or “Fornisci tu la risposta giusta.”

Second day. In class, check answers to the homework, then proceed to cover some of the “Dopo la visione” activities. Later divide the class into groups and assign one or more of the questions from the “Spunti per la discussione orale.” Ask the students to take some notes so that they can report their answers to the whole class. Assign the Internet-based exercises, “La scena,” and the reading in the expansion activities for homework.

Third day. Ask the students to share the results of their Internet research with one another and with you. Check answers to the “La scena” activity and verify comprehension of the reading in the expansion activities. Quickly go over the “Spunti per la scrittura” and ask the students which ones they would like to write about. Have the students work on some ideas for a composition and compare them with a partner, then with the whole class. Assign a composition from “Spunti per la scrittura” for the following class, when you will collect all compositions for correction and grading.