

# Teacher's Guide to The Academy Awards

**A Teacher's Guide to The Academy Awards** by Frank W. Baker  
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Note: There are many reasons The Academy Awards attract attention. Yes, viewers want to know who might win and perhaps what celebrities might be wearing. Another reason to watch: controversy. In 2019: the decision to broadcast the show without a host; the reversal of the decision to award some Oscars during commercials; 2017 was the year of the #MeToo movement created following the sexual abuse allegations emanating from many in the film industry. Controversy over the lack of diversity (#OscarsSoWhite) in recent nominations also brought the Academy (and the process for selecting the awards) more attention. Consider asking your students if they understand diversity as it applies to the movies. Ask your students to read any number of recent news stories about the issue and its ramifications. (Trade publications such as *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* have both given the issue lots of coverage.)

Even though many students may not have seen all of the Oscar-nominated films, they can still view the trailers for best picture nominees and read about them online. Trailers are

considered persuasive texts because they are designed to pique the interest of the audience, sometimes months ahead of a film's release date. Teachers may wish to consider having students create their own trailers. For more on trailers as persuasive texts, see my webpage.

If your students have seen any of the nominated titles, they can be tasked with writing reviews which could be posted online. If students have never written a film review, then this is a perfect opportunity to expose them to sample reviews written by film critics. They can also consider whether or not a particular review helps or hurts a film's attendance. Students could also look for excerpts from published reviews which have now been incorporated into the marketing poster or commercial for a nominated film.

Before starting a unit on the awards, you might wish to use these questions to jump start a lesson with your students:

1. What are the Academy Awards?
2. What is the name of the organization which disseminates them?
3. Who selects which movies get nominated?
4. What are the specific categories of nominated films?
5. Who are the crafts/guilds people who make up the Academy membership?
6. Who gets to vote for the nominated films?
7. How do film studios promote their film(s) to the voting members of the Academy? (consider also: social media)
8. Which of the nominated films have you seen? What was your reaction to it/them? Which one, or ones, do you think might win? Why?
9. Does box office revenue have any role in nominated films—in other words: do movies with large audiences have any better chances of getting recognized than films with smaller audiences?
10. Do you think box office revenues increase after a film is nominated or wins an Academy Award?

11. Who gets to attend the annual Academy Awards ceremony?
12. Why does this annual film rite get so much attention?
13. How much does a 30-second commercial, inside the Oscar broadcast, cost?
14. Who benefits from the Oscar broadcast/ from winning an award? Explain.
15. What role does social media play in the broadcast; promotion of films; getting us to watch the films; review/comment on them?

### **Related Education Resources:**

- Download: 2020 Oscar contending screenplays
- This is how much it costs to win an Oscar (infographics)
- Want to Win An Oscar? Spend Millions
- Frank's Motion Picture/Film Study webpage / Language of Film website/ Scriptwriting In The Classroom webpage
- Media Literacy: Teaching The Oscars / AMPAS Media Literacy Film Study Guides
- Meeting Common Core Standards With Film: Comparing The Book with its Film Version
- **For Your Consideration:** Studying Movie Marketing Ads During Awards Season
- Film In The Classroom (NYT)
- BOOK: 85 Years of the Oscar: The Official History of the Academy Awards
- The Film Canon Project
- The Carpetbagger (NY Times); The Envelope (LA Times)
- Teachers Look to Film to Foster Critical Thinking
- Seven Teaching Resources on Film Literacy
- Part One and Part Two of an Interview With Frank on Teaching the Oscars
- Teaching Students About Film Careers & Cinema Literacy
- Essay: Movies Are Not History (And They Will Never Be)
- Books About Film; Lesson Plans About Film