

Sample Chapter: Billy Elliot by Stephen Daldry

SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS

If Billy Elliot is your prescribed text for the Common Module, you are required to explore and analyse the text used in a specific situation. You are expected to understand the ways the text communicates information, ideas, bodies of knowledge, attitudes and belief systems through Human Experiences. You are required to know the text in detail, including the context of the film and how the characters, setting and plot represent the processes of 'transitioning' and the results of the transitions within new phases of life and social contexts. You will also be required to consider how transitions can result in innovative ideas and knowledge, changes in attitudes and beliefs, and an expanded view of the self and others. You will be required to examine a related text of your own choosing. Refer to chapter 2 for more information about related texts for Module A.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context

About the director: Born on 2 May 1960 in Dorset, England, Stephen Daldry made his big-screen directorial debut with Billy Elliot in 2000, followed by *The Hours* in 2002, *The Reader* in 2008 and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* in 2011. He has been nominated for Best Director and or Best Picture at the Academy Awards for all four films. After graduating from Sheffield University he began to direct stage productions at the Gate Theatre in London and later the Royal Court Theatre. Daldry toured South Yorkshire pit villages with a show about miners' wives in 1984. The screenwriter, Lee Hall, having grown up in Newcastle (in England), an industrial town, experienced the effects of poverty on culture. Recently, he directed a stage musical adaptation of Billy Elliot. In 2009 his work on the stage musical earned him a Tony Award for Best Director of a Musical.

About the film: The film, set in the time of the 1984–85 miners' strike in Britain, explores the implications of this strike as mining became less profitable throughout the late 1970s during Margaret Thatcher's time as leader of the Conservative Party. The government's desire to increase the use of machinery was met with resistance from the mining unions due to the threat to jobs. Thatcher also wanted to reduce the power of the unions. In 1984 the National Coal Board in Britain, who managed the coal industry, announced the closure of 20 pits, which would result in 20,000 miners losing their jobs. Violence erupted on June 18th of that year between police and striking miners at the Orgreave Coking Plant. The strike that ensued lasted almost a year, with over 11 000 people arrested and more than 8000 charged. There was great turmoil amongst the miners about whether to strike or continue working. Eventually the miners conceded defeat and returned to work. Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013) was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990, and the Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. She is known for being the longest-serving British Prime Minister of the 20th century and is currently the only woman to have held the office. She was dubbed the "Iron Lady" by a Soviet journalist. The name stuck as it represented her hard line politics and leadership style. Her political philosophy and economic policies emphasised deregulation (particularly of the financial sector), flexible labour markets, the privatisation of state-owned companies, and reducing the power and influence of trade unions.

Purpose

This is a Bildungsroman ("coming of age") film where the main protagonist (Billy) undergoes a psychological and moral period of growth. The film represents the possibilities available to people when they pursue their dreams despite setbacks imposed on them by their environment. It also challenges gender stereotypes, exploring the effects of limiting attitudes towards the abilities of people to transition into not only different stages in life but stratas of society.

Audience

Billy Elliot would be enjoyed by people of all ages and interests. The film was later adapted as a young teenage novel by Melvin Burgess and a musical stage play. Its themes of overcoming adversity and the value of endurance in the pursuit of dreams makes it universally appealing.

KEY TERMS

Coal mining	when coal is extracted from the ground; coal is valued for its energy content, and, since the 1880s, in particular for the generation of electricity
County Durham	where the film is set, has a mixture of mining and farming heritage, as well as a heavy railway industry. Its economy is historically based on coal and iron ore mining
Royal Ballet School	situated in London, it is one of the world's greatest centres for the training of classical ballet; its mission is to 'provide artistic and academic training of the highest possible calibre'

British social class system based on models of social stratification (levels) in which people are grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories—upper, middle, and lower classes or working class

Lower class referred to as the working class, where people are usually employed in low-paying jobs with weak economic security; also indicates people with few resources and a low income

HOW HUMAN EXPERIENCES RELATES TO BILLY ELLIOT

Facing life's challenges

As a young teenager, Billy is faced with the traumatic experience of losing his mother. Her death is felt deeply by all family members as they struggle to cope with life without her. This is shown through the fact that they barely speak about her and how the family members withdraw into their own worlds. It is an isolating time for Billy. In order to cope, Billy is drawn into a world of dancing, where he is able to express his true self and escape the misery and violence of his home life. Billy's father, Jackie, copes with the loss of his wife by emotionally shutting down. As one of the striking miners, he faces insecurity in his workplace as the government strives to break the hold of the unions. Likewise, Billy's older brother, Tony, deals with his grief by narrow-mindedly holding onto views about the miners' strike. He is aggressive in his interactions with his family. Billy also experiences the burden of looking after his grandmother who has dementia. The film explores the resistance Billy experiences transitioning into a new stage of life where the world he enters into differs greatly from the world he has been living in.

For Billy, ballet provides him with the opportunity to freely express himself and deal with the emotional impact of losing his mother. It also provides a means to transition out of the working class background that seeks to define and restrict him. Dancing allows Billy to 'sort of disappear ... flying, like a bird, like electricity'. In the opening shots of the film, showing Billy dancing along the suburban streets, it becomes obvious that dancing is a compulsion for him. When Billy brings the cassette tape with 'I love to Boogie', at the beginning of his lessons with Mrs Wilkinson, it is clear that music and dancing provide the freedom from the constraints of his world he so desperately desires. Similarly the film ends with Billy leaping through the air as the lead in *Swan Lake*, where the camera freezes on him in mid-air. This represents Billy's triumphant transition into the world of ballet and a new social class and his consequential freedom.

Breaking taboos and challenging stereotypes

Billy's transition into the world of ballet challenges conservative attitudes within his family and the community of working class County Durham in the 1980s. At first Billy keeps his ballet a secret, fearing criticism from his family and the mining-town community. This mining-town culture dictates that a man be virile and masculine in a specific way. Common values within this society are shown through the boxing coach, who tells Billy, when it is clear boxing is not his strength, he is 'a disgrace to them gloves ... your father, and the traditions of this boxing hall'. Billy is trapped within a world that holds inflexible rules and traditions based on stereotypes and gender bias and does not accept difference. Billy is faced with the challenge of overcoming the culture of homophobia, which is widespread. This is shown through Jackie's disbelief about his son's attraction to ballet—'Lads do football ... or ... boxing ... or wrestling ... not friggin' ballet'. However Billy challenges his father's narrow-minded views when he says, 'It's not just poofs Dad, some ballet dancers are as fit as athletes'. Billy understands that in order to sway his father to his way of thinking he will need to appeal to his rigid perceptions of masculinity. Although frustrated by his father's rejection of his dancing, Billy shows compassion for his father as he understands the limitations of his conditioning, telling Mrs Wilkinson, 'It's not his fault Miss'. Although Mrs Wilkinson tells Billy to 'stand up to him', she agrees to teach him in private as she too understands the limitations on an individual's growth in Everington. She is dealing with her own difficulties as she continues to work and support her family through teaching ballet, while her husband sits at home and drinks. Billy grows to trust Mrs Wilkinson and brings the letter written by his mum to the private lesson as his something 'special', sharing his vulnerability with her. Mrs Wilkinson thereby becomes the mother figure in his life that he has missed out on after his own mother's death, illustrating the value of trusting relationships in making significant transitions.

Billy further demonstrates his open mindedness through his relationship with his childhood friend Michael. Billy sees in his friend the challenges he faces due his difference. Although Billy is startled at first by Michael's cross-dressing, he acquiesces when his friend puts lipstick on him, in an act of acceptance. Billy also assists him with his fantasy of wearing a tutu. Like Billy, who dances in secret at first, Michael only cross-dresses at home, where he feels safe. Michael acknowledges his own father's difficulty in representing the self to the world when he says that his 'Dad does it all the time'. At the end of the film, Michael is present for Billy's role in *Swan Lake*, telling Tony, 'I wouldn't have missed it for the world'. Michael, like Billy, has transitioned into a new environment where he is safe and able to express himself confidently.

Transitioning of the mining world

The film addresses the real life transition in mining during the 1980s in England. It represents the confrontations and pressures experienced by the mining community in Northern England. Throughout the film scenes reflecting the mining community can be seen along with a strong police presence. Billy's father and brother use violence and threats against scabs (people who go against the union and break the strike by working). For the Elliot family, financial pressure was placed on them due to the long strike without pay. Jackie is torn between supporting the strike and supporting

his family, in particular Billy, as his dream to become a dancer becomes a viable possibility. This frustration is shown through the scene where Jackie chops up his late wife's piano for firewood to keep his family warm during the winter. The destruction of the piano symbolises both Jackie's desire to take care of his family and the destruction of the creative aspects of his wife as she was interested in music and the arts. Fearfully, Billy crouches down in fear in a doorway. However, Jackie shows his inner conflict as he asks Billy: 'Do you think she'll mind?' Jackie's distress is further displayed at Christmas when he emotionally collapses and cries after proposing a toast. However this is short lived as Jackie begins to realise his son's potential when he sees him dancing. He acts immediately, marching to Mrs Wilkinson's home to ask how he can help Billy achieve his dream. It is at this point that Jackie transitions from a helpless victim of grief and his workplace circumstances to a position of power where he realises he can actively and productively support his family and in particular Billy.

Activity

How do you relate *Billy Elliot* to Human Experiences?.....

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The film opens with a scene depicting Billy's innate love of dancing as he prances on the streets of his hometown Everington. Billy lives with his widower father Jackie, older brother Tony, and his Grandmother, who has dementia and whom Billy looks after. Both Jackie and Tony are coal miners out on strike.

When Jackie takes Billy to the Sports Centre to learn boxing, he happens upon a ballet class practising in the gym while their proper studio is being used as a soup kitchen for striking miners. It is clear that Billy not only dislikes boxing, but he is not good at it, much to the boxing coach's disgust and his father's disappointment. Without his father's approval, Billy joins the ballet class. When Jackie discovers this after the boxing coach mentions Billy's absence, he angrily prohibits Billy from taking ballet classes. Mrs Wilkinson urges Billy to stand up to his father, but agrees to teach him in private.

Mrs Wilkinson comes to realise Billy's potential and encourages him to audition to study at the Royal Ballet School in London. Billy misses the audition when his brother is arrested during an encounter between police and striking miners. Mrs Wilkinson goes to Billy's house to tell Jackie about the missed audition. Jackie and Tony, concerned that he will be considered homosexual, are angered by her suggestion that Billy could become a professional ballet dancer. Tony is particularly aggressive toward Mrs Wilkinson. They are also stressed by Tony's arrest and deem it inappropriate for Mrs Wilkinson to be telling the family about an audition they think irrelevant at this time.

Over Christmas, Billy's best friend, Michael, kisses him on the cheek. Although Billy is not gay, he accepts his friend's urges and allows him to put lipstick on him. Later, when Jackie sees Billy dancing in the gym, he realises that his son is very talented and could have a shot at becoming a professional ballet dancer. He then decides to do all he can to support his son. When Jackie attempts to cross the picket line to pay for Billy's training Tony blocks him. Jackie is able to take Billy to London when the community raise the funds needed for Billy's audition. Billy performs well in his own artistic style, despite his nerves. Out of frustration and fear that he will not get in, he punches another boy and is sternly rebuked by the audition panel. It appears that Billy has missed another opportunity, but when he responds to the panel's question about how he feels when he dances—like 'electricity', it becomes clear that dancing is part of his innate nature. Billy returns home with his father. He later receives a letter of offer to The Royal Ballet School, and fully transitions into the world of ballet. In the final scene, a mature Billy takes the stage as the lead role in Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, as Jackie, Tony, and Michael proudly watch in the audience.

CHARACTERS

Billy Elliot: He is a free spirited individual, who is compelled to express himself through dance. He is the young son of Jackie and has recently lost his mother. He is able to transition from the working class environment he grew up in to the world of ballet.

Jackie Elliot: He is Billy's father, who has lost his wife and is struggling to support his family during a crippling mining strike. Jackie reacts to his wife's death and enforced poverty by being angry, aggressive and distant. Eventually we see the depth of his love for Billy as he overcomes his own prejudices and assists his son in becoming a dancer.

Tony Elliot: He is Billy's older brother, who is aggressive in his tone and actions. He is bitter about the mining strike and views the world simply as he values rules and traditions. He uses violence to deal with the loss of his mother.

Billy's grandmother: She has dementia and is caught up in her own mental state. However, she once aspired to be a professional dancer in Durham.

Billy's mother: From the shot of the gravestone, we see that she died a few months before the film begins.

Mrs Wilkinson: She assists Billy in transitioning to the world of ballet as she teaches him in private and recognises his talent, later encouraging him to audition for The Royal Ballet School. She is sarcastic and chain-smokes, challenging ideas of traditional ballet teachers. In her own life she faces challenges through the unemployment of her husband who

drinks and has depression.

Michael: He is Billy's friend who likes to dress up in women's clothes.

Debbie: She is Mrs Wilkinson's daughter, who also goes to ballet. She makes a sexual advance towards Billy, but he ignores it.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by writing your ideas about what each character quote tells you about the character/s and about Human Experiences. The first one has been completed as an example.

Character quote	What the quote tells you about the character/s and Human Experiences
Tony: 'You never cross a picket line.'	Tony's stubborn attitudes show that he is unwilling to consider other options. This limits his ability to transition out of the poverty he is living in.
Mrs Wilkinson: [If Billy pursues dance] 'He won't grow up to race whippets, grow leeks or piss his wages up the wall.'	
Billy: [to Mrs Wilkinson] 'You're the same as everyone else, all you want to do is tell me what to do ...'	
Billy: 'I don't want a childhood. I want to be a ballet dancer.'	
Jackie: [to Mrs Wilkinson] 'Thanks for everything you've done for Billy, but he's my son, isn't he? I'll handle this myself.'	
Tony: [to Jackie] 'Since Mum died you're nothing but a uselesstwat. What you going to do about it?'	
Mrs Wilkinson: [to Billy] 'She must have been a very special woman.'	
Billy: 'No, she was just me Mum.'	
Jackie: [to Tony] 'It's for me boy, he may be a genius for all we know ... Let's give the boy a fucking chance.'	
Billy: [to the judges] 'Once I get going, I forget everything. Sort of disappear ...'	

SETTING

There are a number of settings in *Billy Elliot* including:

County Durham (northern England): Set in 1984 in the fictitious mining town of Everington. The working class community has been devastated by the miners' strike. Everington is a struggling town fuelled with anger and violence due to the miners' strike.

The Royal Ballet School in London: The ballet school is a different world compared to Everington. The school itself is grand with sophisticated architecture. The school prides itself on tradition and rules.

Activity

Look at the following descriptions reflecting settings in the text. The purpose of the setting is to create an atmosphere. Identify what these settings reflect about the mood of the text, and what they tell the reader about Human Experiences.

Modelled response

Setting: locker room in The Royal Ballet School

Mood and representation of Human Experiences:

The director illustrates how Billy is out of place in The Royal Ballet School. He keeps his head down and tries to cope with the mixed emotions he is feeling. He knows that he wants to enter into the world of ballet, but he is afraid he is not good enough and that he will not fit in. It is in the locker room where he punches another student out of frustration. However, he continues, despite his anguish, and eventually is accepted into the school, completing his transition into a new stage of his life, ensuring a better life for himself.

Setting: streets with the riot police

Mood and representation of Human Experiences:.....

Setting: bedrooms

Mood and representation of Human Experiences: _____

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Symbolism

The director uses the symbolism of dance to illustrate the way Billy expresses himself. It appears that the music takes over and he loses himself. Dance is also a way for Billy to deal with his pain and anger. This is particularly shown in the scene where Mrs Wilkinson confronts Billy's family about the missed audition. The argument between Mrs Wilkinson and the Elliot family is drowned out for Billy as he imagines he is tap dancing to escape the angry interaction. Billy begins his dance routine, indicating that dance is a way that he expresses his frustration and anger. The director uses the visual metaphor of Billy dancing against the brick wall to show how Billy copes with conflict. The wall symbolises the barrier Billy faces to be heard and to express himself authentically. The brick wall represents the limiting beliefs of Billy's family and how these prevent Billy from being true to himself. However, there is hope for Billy that is created through his compulsion to dance. In the long shot of Billy running up the hill, it appears that he is limping, but he is actually tap dancing as one foot will not stop dancing. Despite the resistance Billy experiences, the director positions the responder to perceive Billy's innate dance ability and compulsion as the impetus for his transition into the world of ballet and social class it signifies. The sailboat in the background indicates an escape to another world representative of the audition Billy missed. In addition, the water symbolises Billy's emotional depth and the impact of his family's resistance to him dancing.

Doors are used to symbolically represent transitions into new stages of life and life experiences. They also represent the resistance some characters experience entering the new worlds these transitions signify. When Jackie discovers Billy at his ballet lesson, he forcefully pushes Billy through the door of the ballet school into the old familiar world. In the medium shot, Billy turns around to look back at the new world he is discovering, while Jackie looks forward, indicating the changing nature of Billy's desires that are different to his fathers. Ultimately, Billy shows courage as he realises that his transition is not based on a shared experience with his father, or the other members of his family. He must forge 'new ground' if he is to succeed, something that is difficult for a child. Children generally rely on the support of family and other respected adults to lead the way when making transitions in life. Billy's transition is even more challenging as his path is unclear and completely foreign to his family and the culture of the community he resides in. The director therefore suggests that through individual will and persistence, extraordinary transitions are possible.

When Billy is awakened to the possibilities of an improved social standing he pauses as he realises that he is going against all expectations of him. A medium shot shows Billy dressed formally in his school uniform outside Mrs Wilkinson's house. He symbolically pauses on the precipice of entering into the middle classes. Similarly, when he gets into Mrs Wilkinson's car to discuss the possibility of auditioning for The Royal Ballet School, he demonstrates that he is willingly transitioning into a new world, which requires courage. Mrs Wilkinson also demonstrates courage when she goes to the Elliot household to talk to the family about Billy's audition. The director positions her in a medium shot directly in front of a doorway, suggesting that she too is entering a different world, which is unfamiliar to her. She is emboldened however by her altruistic desire to help Billy as she recognises that he has talent that requires tuition far beyond her own capacity to mentor.

The gentle sound of piano music symbolises Billy's mother's love of music and art which is probably where Billy gets his artistic flair for dancing. Her teaching Billy to play the piano implies she may have wanted a better future for him than that offered by the culture of the mining community. The brightly coloured clothing in photographs of Billy's mother is the only bright colour in the dark living room of the family home. The family photo also reveals Billy's close relationship with his mum as they lean into each other. She tells Billy to 'always be yourself' through her letter to him, written when she knew she was dying. It is this inspiration that drives Billy to succeed, thereby indicating the significance of loving and supportive relationships in making meaningful transitions in life.

Activity

Find other examples of symbolism in the text and explain how they represent Human Experiences. Try to refer to language forms and features when explaining the effect of symbolism.

Modelled response

Symbolism: Windows

How it represents Human Experiences: _____

Windows are symbolically used throughout the film to indicate the distance between family members. When Billy dances on the rooftop Tony looks through a closed window unimpressed. Not only is the viewer's ability to see Tony clearly obscured, but so is Tony's ability to see Billy's talent and love of dancing. This indicates that he is shut off from accepting his brother as he is, stringently holding onto stereotypical values indicative of the community he lives in.

Symbolism: in the boxing ring when Jackie sees Billy boxing, Jackie looks through a wire fence

How it relates to Human Experiences: _____

Symbolism: ballet dancing

How it represents Human Experiences: _____

Intertextuality

In Billy Elliot, Billy is an outcast searching to belong in a society that does not accept difference. In this way he is similar to the ugly duckling in *The Ugly Duckling*, by Hans Christian Andersen, which was written in 1845. Like the ugly duckling, Billy experiences an intuitive drive to find himself and effectively 'come home'. His persistence is rewarded when he is accepted into The Royal Ballet School, just as the ugly duckling is accepted when he finds a flock of swans. At first the swan is unsure if he will be accepted as he is so used to being rejected. Similarly Billy Elliot experiences the same doubts when he punches another boy at the audition in London out of frustration. Both the ugly duckling and Billy make transitions to their new world; in the case of Billy, he transitions to a social class where he is accepted for his talent. The director represents this intertextual connection through the Swan wallpaper, which decorates the room of a bedroom and feathers that fill the room after a pillow fight. In the final shots Billy metaphorically becomes the 'swan' as an accomplished ballet dancer dressed in the swan leggings of Matthew Bourne's much respected version of *Swan Lake*. Consistently throughout the film images of violence and the miners' strike accompany the everyday life of characters in Everington. As Debbie explains to Billy that 'plenty of boys do ballet', but not in Everington, she taps a stick along a wall full of posters representing the strikers. As they walk, a barrier of defiant riot police officers with shields and helmets replace the posters, illustrating their neighbourhood landscape. Billy scornfully declares them 'poofs', representing the values he has been brought up with that do not necessarily mirror his own. At this stage his uncertainty about transitioning to a new world is apparent. Debbie continues to tap her stick along the police shields as they walk past. Neither Billy, nor Debbie react to this, indicating the normality of such a police presence. They live with this potential for violence every day.

Activity

Find other examples of intertextual references in the text and explain how they represent Human Experiences. Try to refer to language forms and features when explaining the effect of intertextuality.

Modelled response

Intertextual reference: Mrs Wilkinson tells Billy the story of the ballet *Swan Lake* as they travel across a river on a car trip

How it represents Human Experiences: _____

Like the swan in *Swan Lake* who comes alive a few hours every night, Billy too feels this exhilaration when he dances. Metaphorically, Billy's true spirit is represented through dancing. He feels liberated as he intuitively dances. Billy is therefore able to make a connection between the unfamiliar outside world of ballet dancing and his own experience. This spurs him on to continue his quest to dance as he feels an affinity with this larger world. The director suggest that this sense of connection is vital to sustaining Billy's commitment to ballet, which presumably continues in his life. This can be seen in the final shots of the film showing Billy performing as an adult. His prowess as a ballet dancer is clearly illustrated, indicating he has developed his skills through hard work and adherence to the rules intrinsic to formal forms of education.

Intertextual reference: Billy performing in *Swan Lake* at the end of the film

How it represents Human Experiences: _____

Intertextual reference: coal miners' strike during the 1980s

How it represents Human Experiences: _____

Film techniques

In the opening scene, the director establishes Billy love of music and dancing. Billy nervously and excitedly places a record on a record player. His hands shake with excitement as he is about to enter the world of music and dance. In the opening sequence we notice how young Billy is (11 years old)—we first see the young hands, arms, leg and chest. Billy appears to be running and his hand gestures mimic that of a bird—one of several references to birds in the film. The first words of the song, 'Cosmic dancer' emphasise Billy's youth—'I was dancing when I was twelve' is repeated. The song also uses a metaphor, 'I danced myself right out of the womb'. The director thereby positions the responder to appreciate Billy's innate desire to dance. Dance is the essence of who he is. He must dance as it is the most natural way for him to express himself. Although Billy is very young, in his world he is responsible for caring for his grandmother. He has a very loving and caring relationship with his grandmother and he takes the responsibility to look after her seriously. Even though she has dementia, she is the only feminine influence in the house. As his mother was quite artistic, and his grandmother too

aspired to be a dancer, Billy feels an affinity with the creativity the feminine aspect inspires. It is this connection to the feminine and the lack of role models in his life that he can actually express his desires to, that makes Billy's transition into a new world more difficult. To a certain degree, he is on his own, as his desires deviate significantly from expectations of young boys in the mining community he comes from.

Jackie transitions into the world of the strikebreaker—'scab'—when he puts his family responsibilities above his pride. This decision allows Billy to realise his dream of becoming a dancer as money is needed to fund Billy's efforts. The high angle shot of Jackie walking towards the coach that takes the strikebreakers to work, illustrates the difficulty he experiences making this decision. He is however, partially relieved as his efforts will enable his son to improve his chances in life. This is a significant shift for Jackie as he previously thought that men should play football and box. As Jackie walks towards the bus, he stops, turns back and looks out at the sea, which signifies that his own world is expanding as a result of making this decision.

In *Billy Elliot* the music enhances the ideas in the film. In the library scene, 'Get it on,' by T. Rex is used to represent the rebellious nature of Billy. Billy sees another young man breaking the rules by 'mooning' the police. He also decides to 'get it on' and steal the ballet book that he 'can't take ... out on a junior ticket'. The lyrics of the song, 'Take me' encourage Billy to steal the library book. The difference between the young man and Billy, however is that Billy steals a book to assist in his transition to a better world. He does not participate in breaking the rules merely for the fun of it or to shock. Billy actively challenges his father, staging his own revolution, echoing the sentiments of 'Children of the revolution' by T. Rex. By becoming a ballet dancer, he confronts the narrow-minded stereotypes of what it means to be a man. Even though Jackie is initially violent towards Billy in an attempt to keep Billy in the only world he knows, Billy resists. The very way Billy deals with his father's rejection of his desires is through instinctively dancing. It is only when Jackie realises that he cannot stop Billy's dancing that he begins to help him.

The audition scene represents Billy's transition into the world of ballet. On the journey to the audition the camera moves from the vehicle Billy and his father are driving to a long shot of the sky, representing the world that is unfolding for Billy and the possibilities available to him in this world. As Billy walks towards the Ballet school, the *mis-en-scene* shows us through the long shot that Billy is walking in front of his father. The subjective treatment from Jackie's point of view shows us that he is watching his son walk away from him into another world that he will not be part of. The shot represents the internal transition that Jackie undergoes as well as Billy, as he has to let go of his son in order for Billy to achieve his dreams. Later, we see the discomfort that Jackie experiences through the medium shot of him and Billy facing the audition panel when Billy is reprimanded for pushing another boy. Jackie looks dismayed and out of his depth as he is challenged by the audience panel.

The long shot of the audition panel represents how intimidating this new world is for both Jackie and Billy. The panel is lined up in an ordered row and the desk separates them from Billy and Jackie who sit in solitary chairs in the middle of the large room. The juxtaposition of the shots enhances their isolation. The panel talk to each other in hushed whispers. When asked if they have any questions, Billy and Jackie decline as they are overwhelmed and intimidated in this new world they have entered into. However, the love Jackie feels for his son does not wane as he perseveres for the sake of Billy's future. Therefore, the director positions us to have great sympathy for Jackie as his son's experiences force him to confront his own prejudices, values and beliefs that are at the heart of the community's culture he is part of. In order for his son to succeed, Jackie recognises that he must let go of limiting values and beliefs about masculinity and social class, thereby enabling him to transition into a new way of thinking that is both beneficial for his growth as a human being as well as the growth of his son.

Billy, like the audience, witnesses the violence in Everington when Tony runs away from the riot police. As Tony tries to escape, he moves through several doors, symbolically representing his need to push through barriers in order to escape. His escape is futile however as he is cornered by hundreds of police. The audience is given a greater perspective on how Tony must feel as the camera looks from behind the policeman toward Tony. Through the subjective treatment we see Tony beaten, just as Billy would have witnessed this disturbing scene. The juxtaposition of the violent world of the miners abusing a scab labourer and the peaceful world of Mrs Wilkinson's ballet class depicts these divergent realities. All that can be heard in her class is her voice giving jargonistic instructions. This is contrasted to the chaotic scene of men shouting abuse at the miners going back to work, in opposition of the miners' union.

Activity

Watch a number of key scenes in the film. For each scene, draw five significant shots representative of the scene. Explain how each shot represents Human Experiences. Follow the guide below.

Shot:

Purpose of shot:

What is depicted:

How film techniques represent Human Experiences: