

GCSE Film Studies

A Timeline of the History of Film

The following timeline highlights only the most important moments. There is a lot more detail around each of these.

As you watch the films we will be studying, ask yourself how and where they fit into this timeline. What effect have these developments had on your film?

The films you will be studying and their years of production are:

- King Solomon's Mines (1950)
- Jaws (1975) *[not for the exam; this will be your practice film]*
- Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)
- Spirited Away (2001)
- District 9 (2009)
- Skyfall (2012)
- Whiplash (2014)

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| 1895 | The first moving images are recorded. Almost immediately there is a split between the Lumiere Brothers who produce documentary sequences – films showing the world as it is – and Georges Méliès who produces fantasy films filled with optical effects and camera tricks. |
| 1897-1927 | <p>Films develop from shorts (around 5 minutes using one reel of film) to feature length (around 90 minutes).</p> <p>The films are silent and any dialogue is shown as written captions. Music is provided where possible by a live orchestra which plays as the film is shown.</p> <p>The basics of film structure are established during this period; lighting, editing and mise en scene. Newer lightweight cameras allow shooting on location.</p> |
| 1920s | <p>Hollywood becomes the heart of the American film industry. It evolves into the Big 5 Studios –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paramount, • Warner Bros., • Leow's/MGM, • Fox (which becomes 20th Century Fox in 1935) • Radio Keith Orpheum (RKO) <p>And the Little 3 Studios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbia • Universal • United Artists <p>Hollywood becomes vertically integrated; that is, these studios make the films, they distribute the films and they own the theatres in which the films are shown.</p> |

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| 1927 | <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (Dir. Alan Crosland) starring Al Jolson is released. It is the first feature film with a soundtrack. |
| 1935 | <i>Becky Sharp</i> (Dir Rouben Mamoulian) is released. It is the first film to use the Technicolor Corporation's 'three strip' colour process which allows films to be shown in colour. |
| 1937 | Walt Disney releases <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarves</i> , the first feature length film to be entirely hand animated. |
| 1948 | United States vs Paramount , also known as the Paramount Decree , is a court case which brings to an end the vertical integration of the film industry. Studios can now no longer own all the elements of film production and exhibition. This gives rise to independent film makers outside the studio system and agents who produce films which the studios then distribute and exhibit. |
| 1950s | The popularity of television means that fewer people are going to the cinema. The film industry responds by trying to give the audience something they can't get at home – widescreen and 3D . |
| Late 1950s | Lightweight cameras suitable for hand-held use – rather than being fixed on a tripod – become cheap enough for widespread use. They become popular with documentary makers and young directors in France (the French New Wave). |
| 1970s | Garret Brown develops the Steadicam , a rig worn by the cameraman who can move around while keeping the image steady. First used in 1975 and made famous by <i>The Shining</i> (Dir Stanley Kubrick, 1980) |
| 1975 | The enormous success of <i>Jaws</i> (Dir Steven Spielberg) creates the idea of the Summer Blockbuster . This becomes the main way that studios make money in the future. |
| 1977 | George Lucas established Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) to provide the special effects (SFX) for his film <i>Star Wars</i> . The success of this film cements the idea of the Summer Blockbuster and creates the idea of tie-in merchandising (toys, actions figures etc) |
| 1990s | ILM starts to use computer generated imagery (CGI) for SFX. At first tis is combined with practical effects (as with dinosaurs in <i>Jurassic Park</i> (dir Spielberg, 1993) but by the end of the decade CGI is used to replace practical effects. |
| 2001 | In <i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> (dir Peter Jackson) and the two sequels, Andy Serkis plays Gollum. The character is entirely created by CGI, mapped on to the movements of the actor. This technology – called motion capture allows non-human characters to be created convincingly without complex make up. |
| 2000s | High quality cheap cameras allow people to shoot their own films more easily and digital editing makes even quite complex special effects doable. Youtube and other streaming sites allow people to distribute their films for free and find an audience. |

Remember also to think about the time your film was made in terms of the **social** and **historical context**.