

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD AND WHY IT IS SO GREAT

1. Uwagi ogólne

Zestaw materiałów opatrzony wspólnym tytułem „*Mad Max: Fury Road*” and *why it is so great* jest adresowany do studentów uzupełniających studiów magisterskich studiujących kierunki humanistyczne. Przedstawione ćwiczenia mogą być wykorzystane do pracy przede wszystkim z grupami studentów filmoznawstwa (ze względu na konieczność dość dobrej znajomości filmu *Mad Max: Fury Road*).

2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+ (z pomocą nauczyciela) oraz C1 i C1+

3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń

Ćwiczenia zaprezentowane w tym artykule są przeznaczone na jedną lub dwie jednostki lekcyjne (w zależności od tempa pracy grupy). Czas trwania został ustalony na podstawie doświadczenia wynikającego z pracy z wykorzystaniem poniższymi ćwiczeń w grupach filmoznawstwa na poziomie C1.

4. Cele dydaktyczne

W swoim założeniu artykuł ma rozwijać podstawowe umiejętności językowe, takie jak czytanie, mówienie oraz słuchanie. Kolejnym celem jest rozwijanie krytycznego myślenia, jako że wiele z pytań ma charakter filozoficzny.

5. Uwagi i sugestie

W zbiorze przewidziane są ćwiczenia na interakcję student–nauczyciel, student–student oraz na pracę indywidualną. Ćwiczenia w zależności od poziomu grupy, stopnia zaangażowania studentów w zajęcia i kierunku mogą być odpowiednio zmodyfikowane. Zadania tu zamieszczone możemy omawiać na zajęciach lub część przedstawionych ćwiczeń zadać jako pracę domową, jeżeli nie chcemy poświęcać zbyt dużo czasu na zajęciach. Ponieważ wykonanie zadań związanych z recenzją filmu może grupom B2+ sprawić kłopoty, można zachęcić ich do wspólnej pracy i na przykład porównywania odpowiedzi. Materiały obejmują analizę plakatu filmu, sceny z niego wraz z pytaniami do dyskusji w parach i grupach oraz recenzję tegoż filmu z ćwiczeniami na zrozumienie oraz leksykalno-gramatycznymi. Część zadań pomaga rozwijać umiejętność zdawania egzaminu, ponieważ należy znaleźć informacje w jak najkrótszym czasie (zadanie 5). Lekcję można rozpocząć od analizy plakatu (można go też porównać z pozostałymi plakatami reklamującymi różne filmy akcji, które można znaleźć w tym zbiorze), a następnie przejść do recenzji lub analizy plakatu oraz poszczególnych scen i dyskusji na ich temat (jeśli nauczyciel woli się skupić na rozmowie). Jeśli brakuje czasu, można pominąć zadania na słownictwo związane z recenzją i pozostawić je jako pracę domową.

6. Klucz

W I części klucz zawiera odpowiedzi do zadań jak również moje sugestie odpowiedzi do innych (ze względu na to, że zajęcia mają m.in. charakter dyskusji), które mogą pomóc nauczycielowi.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD AND WHY IT IS SO GREAT

1. Choose the words to describe a scene from a film to another student. Do positive/negative connotations of a given word change depending on a given film?

explicit predictable heart-wrenching art-house gripping
gross gory harrowing hyped-up off-the-wall
uplifting soppy over-the-top dreary convoluted poignant
cringeworthy evocative of enchanting fast-paced

2. Now choose three words from the box and find one synonym for each:

.....-.....
.....-.....
.....-.....

3. Work with a partner. Think of 2 well-known films you have seen and describe 2 scenes from them (one from each film), using the vocabulary from the previous tasks to your partner and have him /her guess what film it is. You can choose a scene that is not iconic to make the task harder for your friend. Then swap and he/she will describe a scene to you.

4. Analyse the *Mad Max: Fury Road* movie poster. What would your expectations of the film be if you hadn't watched the film?

- A) If you haven't, what do you now expect?
- B) How is this poster different from many other posters advertising other films filled to the brim with action?

5. Scan the article and find information about:

- A) Immortan Joe – Para.
 B) Furiosa's job – Para.
 C) the Vuvalini – Para.
 D) Eve Ensler – Para.
 E) the Doof Warrior – Para.
 F) Nux – Para.
 G) John Seale – Para.

6. Read the article and answer the questions:

- A) What is the humour in the film like?

- B) What might Hardy's fans be a tad unhappy about?

- C) What is the reviewer's initial worry about the Wives?

- D) Is Max a manly saviour all the time?

- E) What is the point made by the previous *Mad Max* films and Mel Gibson?

- F) What is the "new" Max like in comparison to the "old" one?

- G) Who is Miller likened to and why?

- H) What does the review attribute the fact that the film is not an "unholy mess" to?

Mad Max: Fury Road

By Anthony Lane, May 2015

1. There is a moment, in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, when Max (Tom Hardy) washes blood off his face. This is unsurprising, since he has just engaged in one of many fights, but two points are worthy of note. First, the blood is not his. Second, he washes it off not with water but with mother's milk, siphoned from a gas tanker. And there, in one image, you have George Miller's film – wild and unrelenting, but also possessed of the outlandish poetry, laced with hints of humor, that rises to the surface when the world is all churned up.

2. The movie is set in the near future. There are no cities or civilizations left. The landscape is dying of thirst; water – known as Aqua Cola – is severely rationed; and other resources, notably gasoline, are hoarded and tussled over like scraps of food. Max is a survivor, like everyone else, and, as we join the stream of action, he

is captured and hauled into **servitude** at the Citadel. Girded with towers of rock, this is the desert stronghold of Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne), a monstrous figure who lords it over a swarm of ragged wretches. His toad-like skin is caged in a transparent breastplate, and he breathes through a mask that’s armed with yellowing horses’ teeth and fed by bellows that wheeze up and down on the back of his neck. Probably a charming fellow, once you get to know him.

3. Max, being Max, tries to escape, only to be grabbed once more and strapped to the front of a vehicle, like a fender of flesh, with his sturdy features barred by a metal grille. Tom Hardy fans, who struggled so intently to understand him when he played Bane, in *The Dark Knight Rises*, may be less than thrilled to learn that their hero’s speech is yet again impeded. Just as you’re wondering if the poor guy will ever express himself freely, however, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), a new acquaintance of Max’s, asks, “You want that thing off your face?” The day is saved, though it’s not as if he starts chatting away like Cary Grant in *His Girl Friday*. You could tattoo the entirety of Max’s dialogue onto his biceps. One of his longest lines is “Hope is a mistake.”

4. Furiosa has a prosthetic arm, and her tendency to smear black grease across her brow may cause the fragrance **hunchos** at Dior, where Theron is paid to spread the word about J’Adore, to reach for their atomizers. Furiosa is a driver, employed by Joe’s henchmen to transport precious fuel, who suddenly **goes rogue**, steering the War Rig, her vast and snarling truck, off course. A **posse** is dispatched to hunt her down. We soon discover her concealed cargo – the Wives, five young women who were imprisoned by Immortan Joe and **doomed to** bear his children. Our first glimpse of them **bodes ill**: limber beauties draped in muslin underwear and hosing themselves down in the middle of nowhere. It’s like the start of a *Playboy* shoot. Yet the film not only recovers but winds up as a testament to female resilience, thanks to the Vuvalini – a small and leathery tribe of matriarchs, described by the film’s production designer as “lovely old bikie chicks.” Astride belching motorcycles, they hare up and down sand dunes and accompany Max, Furiosa, and the Wives on the final leg of the plot.

5. I have been looking forward to this movie for months, trying not to watch the trailers more than twice a day, but, fool that I am, I hadn’t foreseen its feminist ambitions – crystallized in the sight of one Wife, heavily pregnant, flinging wide the door of the War Rig and flaunting her belly, like a bronze shield, at her enraged pursuers. (The Wives were coached in preparation for the film by Eve Ensler, the author of *The Vagina Monologues*. This must be a first. Gloria Steinem was never hired as a consultant on *The Dirty Dozen*.) Later comes a **droll** sequence with a sniper’s rifle, as our hero aims at a searchlight, in the distant gloom, but misses. Only one bullet remains. Furiosa takes the gun and hits the target, using Max’s shoulder as a rest. The tough guy is nothing but a cushion.

6. We have met Max before. He first appeared in *Mad Max* (1979), as a youthful cop bent on revenge after a murderous attack on his wife and child. His outfit, like his automobile, was of battered black. He returned, in similar guise, in *The*

Road Warrior (1981) and *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985), opposite a resplendent Tina Turner. All three films were directed by George Miller (he had a co-director on the third), and they have acquired **the burnish** of a cult. Beware of cult flicks, though, whose reputation sits uneasily on little more than a look; how often did the restive kids who papered their walls with stills of *Easy Rider*, or of Brando in *The Wild One*, sit through the actual movie? The earlier *Mad Max* films, it pains me to report, have not weathered well; they seem overacted and overscored, chuckling at nastiness, and held together mainly by the presence of Mel Gibson in the title role. You watched him as you would a live grenade.

7. The good news is that *Mad Max: Fury Road* exists in a different league. It lies way, way beyond Thunderdome, and marks one of the few occasions on which a late sequel outdoes what came before. *Is it a sequel, though?* There are flashbacks to Max's past, but they are over in seconds, and you can certainly relish the new film, in all its lunatic majesty, without being **versed in** Maxist dialectics. Indeed, it **exults in** a proud indifference to backstory. Furiosa mentions her origins, explaining that she was snatched away from "a green place," but that's it. As for Max, Hardy is more earthed than Gibson and less wired – indeed, less mad, propelled not by the engine of wrath but by a solid response to the madness that **engulfs** the characters like a sandstorm. Max's deeds rarely strike us as **gratuitous**. Instead, they seem resignedly brutal, as if there were no other way to live. Whether his deepest desire is for liberty, or simply for a dour solitude, I can't decide, but I loved the coolness with which, having taken command in battle, he melts away, once it's over, into the shifting throng.

8. That wonderful image allows Miller to draw back and survey the scene from on high. Such is the root of his near-mystical prestige as a creator of action films: a bright, instinctive sense of when and where to cut from the telling detail to the wider view, and back again. Those instincts were there in the first *Mad Max*, which, for all its cheapness, picked up rhythm whenever it hit the highway, and they are **resurgent** here. They connect Miller not so much to the panicky despots of the modern blockbuster, like Michael Bay, as to directors of Hollywood musicals, and to the early choreographers of the chase, in the wordless days when pictures lived by motion alone. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the Polecats – aggressors who arc from one vehicle to another, in mid-race, on the end of long stakes – are the descendants of Buster Keaton, who, in *Three Ages*, fell from a roof through three awnings and clutched at a drainpipe, which swung him out into the void and back through an open window.

9. Some things have changed. Miller's debt to the silent cinema is slightly **quelled**, in the new film, by the Doof Warrior, who hangs from the front of a truck and thrashes out power chords on his twin-necked guitar, which also acts as a flame-thrower. Also, Keaton meant nobody harm, whereas the Polecats are bent on little else, as are the War Boys, the Bullet Farmer, Rictus Erectus, and Slit – unfriendly types, released from the strange laboratory of Miller's brain. One of the Wives is called Toast the Knowing, and Nicholas Hoult has a blast as a renegade named Nux,

who spray-paints his lips silver to supercharge the mood. His dream is to die with honor, “shiny and chrome,” like an exploding machine. All this is such fun, and it **teeters** so close to insanity, with a hundred and fifty vehicles at Miller’s disposal, and with a pack of cameras sent into the fracas like baying hounds on a scent, that you come out asking, why is this movie not an unholy mess?

10. Partly, I think, because Miller treats his storyline as Max would treat his car – stripping out **superfluity** and softness, in the interest of pure speed. Throw charges of implausibility at the film, and they bounce off the hood. Credit must go, too, to John Seale, the director of photography, who was **cajoled** out of retirement for this project, and who somehow fills every frame to the brim without spilling. As the War Rig growls through a gully, edged with crags of stone, Seale unveils the beauty within the peril, harking back not just to his own work on *The English Patient* but to that of Freddie Young on *Lawrence of Arabia*, in which a camel bore Peter O’Toole through a similar pass. Matched against the golden dirt of the desert is the sad nocturnal blue of a swamp, where scavengers prowl on stilts and where, in an extraordinary spectacle, Max wrestles with a lonely tree, just as Max von Sydow did in Bergman’s *The Virgin Spring*. No one knows if Miller’s film will endure, as David Lean’s and Bergman’s have done, but it must be said that, for better or worse, *Mad Max: Fury Road* gathers up all that we seem to crave, right now, from our movies, and yanks it to the limit. For anyone who denied that *Titus Andronicus* could ever be mashed up with *The Cannonball Run*, here is your answer, and we are only too happy to follow Nux as he cries, *What a lovely day!* and accelerates into a whirlwind of fire. Enjoy the movie, but for God’s sake don’t drive home.

Source: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/25/high-gear-current-cinema-anthony-lane> [accessed: 20 July 2020].

7. Answer the questions below:

A) Watch Immortan Joe’s speech. What is it evocative of?

The speech, War Boys, rationing the water:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMr3onJmB_g [accessed: 20 July 2020].

B) What is the foundation of Immortan Joe’s power? What is the foundation of power in general?

C) How are war and religion intertwined?

D) What are social relations in the film?

E) Examples of feminism in the film – are they unnecessary? Some action film fans were unhappy, e.g., about Furiosa shoots using Max’s arm and the amount of screen time Charlize Theron had, the Vuvalini fighting and riding motorcycles, the Wives screaming that they are not property, etc.

F) How technologically advanced is this world and what has happened to the language?

- G) Which future do you find more likely to happen, this of *Mad Max* or the one of *Blade Runner*?
- H) In what ways is the world in *Mad Max* the same/different from the world we live in?

8. Discuss the questions below:

- A) The film has been called in another review an A-plus B-movie. What does it mean? Do you agree with this statement?
- B) What makes it (if indeed it does) stand out from other films jam-packed with action?
- C) Why is the film likened to *Easy Rider* and *The Wild One*?
- D) Who do you think gave the strongest performance and why?
- E) What is your take on the dialogue?
- F) What do you think about the way violence is shown in the film? Is it appropriate/excessive/too understated?
- G) How John Seale's previous work may have helped him in the filming of *Mad Max: Fury Road*?

9. Find synonyms in the box for the words from the article.

added quality to become rebellious streaked to overwhelm
 to rejoice knowledgeable to move unsteadily
 to suppress comical people in charge/managers condemned
 enslavement overabundance uncalled for rising
 to persuade to foretell a calamity unyielding
 unconventional a search party

to bode ill	–	the burnish	–
unrelenting	–	versed in	–
outlandish	–	to exult in	–
laced with	–	to engulf	–
servitude	–	gratuitous	–
honchos	–	resurgent	–
to go rogue	–	to quell	–
a posse	–	to teeter	–
doomed to	–	superfluity	–
droll	–	to cajole	–

KEY

1.

The adjectives may have different connotations depending on a given film (e.g., “gory” in reference to a film by Tarantino is a compliment).

2.

explicit – graphic
 predictable – obvious
 heart-wrenching – poignant
 art-house – artistic
 gripping – interesting
 gross – disgusting
 gory – extremely bloody
 harrowing – distressing, horrible
 hyped-up (of a film) – overestimated
 off-the-wall – bizarre
 uplifting – optimistic
 sappy – sentimental
 over-the-top – exaggerated
 dreary – gloomy, terrible
 convoluted – complex
 poignant – sad, tragic
 cringeworthy – disgusting, creepy,
 evocative of – reminding of
 enchanting – charming
 fast-paced – fast

3.

Example: In this scene, both violent and over-the-top, there is unexpected off the wall humour, when a boxer chooses a weapon with which to kill two men attacking his former employer and after rejecting a baseball bat, a hammer and a gun, goes for a Japanese katana (*Pulp Fiction*, Butch saves Marcellus Walles).

4.

- A) A very different action from what we are used to – where a woman is in constant need of being saved.
- B) The woman (Charlize Theron) is the main focus of the poster, whereas the man (Tom Hardy) is barely recognisable. The woman is dirty and ready for a battle to stay alive in a post-apocalyptic world. She is not a sexual object and we do not see her through a so-called male gaze. The poster can be compared to other action film poster, including *Aeon Flux*, where the same actress is featured.

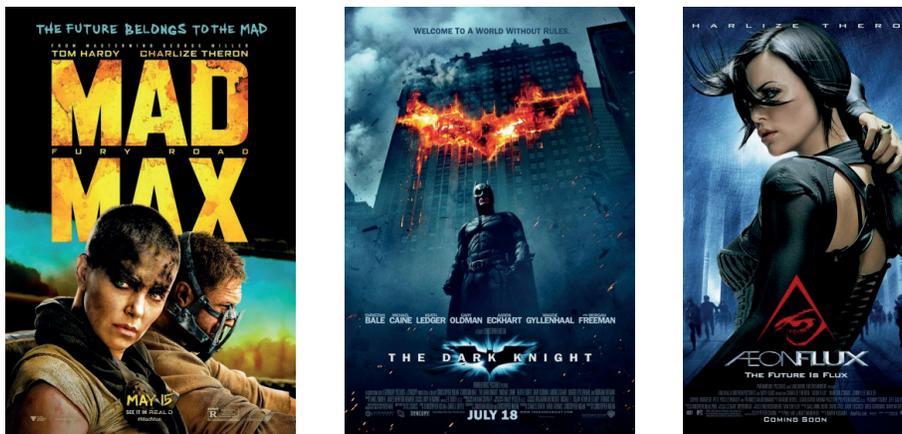


Photo 1. Action film posters

Source: http://cdn.bloody-disgusting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/mad_max_fury_road_ver7_xlg-2.jpg-MadMax:FuryRoad, https://paulmartinblog.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/the_dark_knight_poster.jpg-The-DarkKnight, <http://www.kino.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/aeon-flux-2005-filmplakat-rcm590x842u.jpg>-Aeon on [accessed: 20 July 2020].

Odniesienia do kolejnych ilustracji:

Nikita: <http://entertainment.inquirer.net/files/2011/07/nikita-poster-300x175.jpg>

James Bond: https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/41k11cqJvUL._SY300_.jpg

Tomb Raider: http://www.impawards.com/2001/posters/lara_croft_tomb_raider.jpg

[accessed: 20 July 2020].

5.

- A) Immortan Joe – Para. 2 – “a monstrous figure who lords it over a swarm of ragged wretches. His toad-like skin is caged in a transparent breastplate, and he breathes through a mask that’s armed with yellowing horses’ teeth and fed by bellows that wheeze up and down on the back of his neck. Probably a charming fellow, once you get to know him.”
- B) Furiosa’s job – Para. 4 – “Furiosa is a driver, employed by Joe’s henchmen to transport precious fuel, who suddenly goes rogue, steering the War Rig, her vast and snarling truck, off course.”
- C) The Vuvalini – Para. 4 – “a small and leathery tribe of matriarchs, described by the film’s production designer as “lovely old bikie chicks.” Astride belching motorcycles, they hare up and down sand dunes, and accompany Max, Furiosa, and the Wives on the final leg of the plot.”
- D) Eve Ensler – Para. 5 – “The Wives were coached in preparation for the film by Eve Ensler, the author of *The Vagina Monologues*.”

- E) The Doof Warrior – Para. 9 – “the Doof Warrior, who hangs from the front of a truck and thrashes out power chords on his twin-necked guitar, which also acts as a flamethrower.”
- F) Nux – Para. 9 – “a renegade named Nux, who spray-paints his lips silver to supercharge the mood. His dream is to die with honor, “shiny and chrome,” like an exploding machine.”
- G) John Seale – Para. 10 – “John Seale, the director of photography, who was cajoled out of retirement for this project, and who somehow fills every frame to the brim without spilling.”

6.

- A) It is very subtle – Para. 1 – laced with hints of humour, that rises to the surface when the world is all churned up.
- B) That it is hard to understand him again – Para. 3 – Tom Hardy fans, who struggled so intently to understand him when he played Bane, in *The Dark Knight Rises*, may be less than thrilled to learn that their hero’s speech is yet again impeded.
- C) That it means a drop in the quality of the film – Para. 4 – Our first glimpse of them bodes ill: limber beauties, draped in muslin underwear and hosing themselves down in the middle of nowhere. It’s like the start of a *Playboy* shoot.
- D) No, he’s is an armrest to Furiosa’s rifle at some point, because he missed his shot – Para. 5 – Furiosa takes the gun and hits the target, using Max’s shoulder as a rest. The tough guy is nothing but a cushion.
- E) They did not age well and they mostly rely on Gibson’s acting – Para. 6 – The earlier *Mad Max* films, it pains me to report, have not weathered well; they seem overacted and overscored, chuckling at nastiness, and held together mainly by the presence of Mel Gibson in the title role. You watched him as you would a live grenade.
- F) Generally, less crazy and more tired with the violence – Para. 7 – As for Max, Hardy is more earthed than Gibson and less wired—indeed, less mad, propelled not by the engine of wrath but by a solid response to the madness that engulfs the characters like a sandstorm. Max’s deeds rarely strike us as gratuitous. Instead, they seem resignedly brutal, as if there were no other way to live.
- G) Buster Keaton – Para. 8 – and to the early choreographers of the chase, in the wordless days when pictures lived by motion alone. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the Polecats—aggressors who arc from one vehicle to another, in mid-race, on the end of long stakes—are the descendants of Buster Keaton, who, in *Three Ages*, fell from a roof through three awnings and clutched at a drainpipe, which swung him out into the void and back through an open window.
- H) The fact that Miller steered clear off any superfluity and Seale’s photography – Para. 10 – ...Miller treats his storyline as Max would treat his car—stripping out superfluity and softness, in the interest of pure speed. Throw charges of implausibility at the film, and they bounce off the hood. Credit must go, too, to

John Seale, the director of photography, who was cajoled out of retirement for this project, and who somehow fills every frame to the brim without spilling.

Suggested answers:

- A) Perhaps of the speeches of Stalin and other dictators.
- B) He has the upper hand, as he has resources craved by everyone (in this case, it is water, but it could be anything else.
The foundation of power is always having something others don't have.
- C) Religion has become the cult of war and rejecting life for Valhalla (Norse legends) and Immortan Joe poses as the saviour and redeemer who guarantees a happier life after death.
- D) What are social relations in the film?
There are the haves and the have-nots – Immortan Joe and his family are in power, Imperators (war rig drivers, including Furiosa), War Boys, slaves, including women kept as breeders and cows (yes, cows). The lowest of the low have nothing and have to beg for water.
- E) I don't think they're unnecessary and I don't think the fact that some women shoot very well should come as a surprise.
- F) Both the technology (War Boys fighting with spears and chain saws) in the world and language (Black Thumb – mechanic, aqua cola – water, etc.) have deteriorated
- G) The world of *Mad Max*, as is very likely that we will soon fight for resources which are becoming scarce.
- H) In many ways it is very similar and that is terrifying.

Discuss the questions below:

- A) The film has been called in another review an A-plus B-movie. What does it mean? Do you agree with this statement?
- B) What makes it (if indeed it does) stand out from other films jam-packed with action?
- C) *Easy Rider* is also a road movie where the protagonists are trying to remain free and pay a dear price. *The Wild One* is another film about not conforming to the societal norms.
- E) The dialogue is minimal and that's why it is important to listen to what they say but in the film the actions speak louder – we can see courage, cowardice, sacrifice, friendship, love, etc.
- F) The violence is neither graphic nor understated, perhaps because the makers of the film did not want to desensitise the viewers.

9.

<u>to bode ill</u>	to foretell a calamity
<u>unrelenting</u>	unyielding
<u>outlandish</u>	unconventional

<u>laced with</u>	streaked
<u>servitude</u>	enslavement <u>honchos</u> people in charge/managers
<u>to go rogue</u>	to become rebellious
<u>a posse</u>	a search party
<u>doomed to</u>	condemned
<u>droll</u>	whimsically comical
<u>the burnish</u>	added quality
<u>versed in</u>	knowledgeable
<u>to exult in</u>	to rejoice
<u>to engulf</u>	to overwhelm
<u>gratuitous</u>	uncalled for
<u>resurgent</u>	rising
<u>to quell</u>	to suppress
<u>to teeter</u>	to move unsteadily
<u>superfluity</u>	overabundance
<u>to cajole</u>	to persuade