

## *Introducing English Studies*

### **Chapter 4: Screencast Transcript**

#### **Slide 1 [Title slide]**

Hello. I am Tonya Krouse, co-author of the textbook *Introducing English Studies*, and in this screencast, I will talk about how to assess a cinematic adaptation of a literary work.

#### **Slide 2 [Text]**

Topics we will cover include:

1. People always say that the book is better: what do they mean?
2. Common features of originals and adaptations
3. Differences between originals and adaptations
4. Adaptations of adaptations
5. Inspired by vs. adapted from
6. Adaptations and the cinematic marketplace
7. How to love the original *and* the adaptation using the tools of English Studies

#### **Slide 3 [Text]**

So why do people always get angry at adaptations and feel that they never can measure up to the work on which they were based? Usually, negative reactions to adaptations originate with three points of view.

- First, the original on which the cinematic adaptation was based includes more exposition, additional subplots, characters, or scenes that were cut from the adaptation. If viewers expect complete faithfulness to the original, they will often be disappointed because the constraints of cinema make that kind of faithfulness impossible.
- Second, they imagined the original in a particular way, and the adaptation didn't match up.
- Finally, the adaptation made significant changes to the original, to which lovers of the original object because they seem inessential or they change the story in a significant way.

That said, understanding a bit more about adaptation can help viewers to appreciate both the adaptation and the original on which it is based.

#### **Slide 4 [Text]**

Originals and their adaptations do share important common features, such as plot, characters, and overarching themes. The adaptation may change the setting or increase conflict, but the basics between the two typically are the same.

**Slide 5 [Text]**

Where originals and their adaptations differ, however, tends to connect to differences between written narrative and the film narrative. A cinematic adaptation will, unlike a written work, include visuals and sound. Also, in the service of keeping to a standard length for a television episode or feature film, decisions to cut scenes might be made, or in order to keep audience interest, scenes might be added. Finally, cinematic adaptations rely on acting and setting to create the mood of the piece and to stand in for exposition.

**Slide 6 [Text]**

Although we might be most familiar with cinematic adaptations of written texts, adaptation is not, actually, something that emerges with the invention of cinema. In fact, literature itself sometimes uses adaptation, and sometimes creators make adaptations of adaptations. Allusions and intertextuality are important literary devices, and the connections that creators draw through their use often inspires adaptation.

- Sometimes authors of poetry, fiction, and plays will adapt earlier written texts, as in the case of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, making changes in form or content to the original work.
- It is not uncommon for there to be multiple cinematic adaptations of one literary work, and later adaptations exist in conversation with both the original and other adaptations, as in the case of *Hamlet*.
- Sometimes a cinematic adaptation originates with another work of cinema, as in the case of *A Star is Born*.

**Slide 7 [Text]**

Also, there are times when a work doesn't quite reach the level of verisimilitude required for it to be called an adaptation, but it nevertheless borrows heavily from a source text. How can we distinguish between those texts that are "inspired by" and those texts that are "adaptations of"?

- While the texts may share similar themes or preoccupations, the details of the story told are totally different from the source text.
- In cinema, the screenplay is categorized as an "original" screenplay as opposed to an "adapted" screenplay.

Still, people do sometimes disagree about whether or not something counts as an adaptation if there are too many differences from the original.

**Slide 8 [Text]**

In the end, adaptations are an important part of the cinematic marketplace.

- Adaptations are popular products because they have a ready-made audience.
- According to *Forbes Magazine*, adaptations earn 53% more at the worldwide box office than original movies.

- Adaptations are an important way to manage risk in making production decisions.

So while you might hear people complain about adaptations, the facts speak for themselves: people pay good money to see adaptations.

### **Slide 9 [Text]**

The most important takeaway from learning about adaptations is that it is possible, when we use the analytical skills that English Studies teaches us, to love both the original and the adaptation. In order to have the best experience when we watch an adaptation, we should:

- Focus on the conventions of genre and how it influences storytelling.
- Compare and contrast the original and the adaptation, not to search for “inaccuracies” but to highlight the rationale behind decisions the author might have made vs. decisions of filmmakers.
- View the original and the adaptation as texts in different rhetorical situations who seek to reach different audiences.

Through this kind of analysis, we can discover new things about those original texts that we love and we can gain appreciation for their adaptations.