WATCHING FILM LIKE A HISTORIAN:

A THEMATIC NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON FILM WITH ADVANCED PLACEMENT EUROPEAN HISTORY READERS

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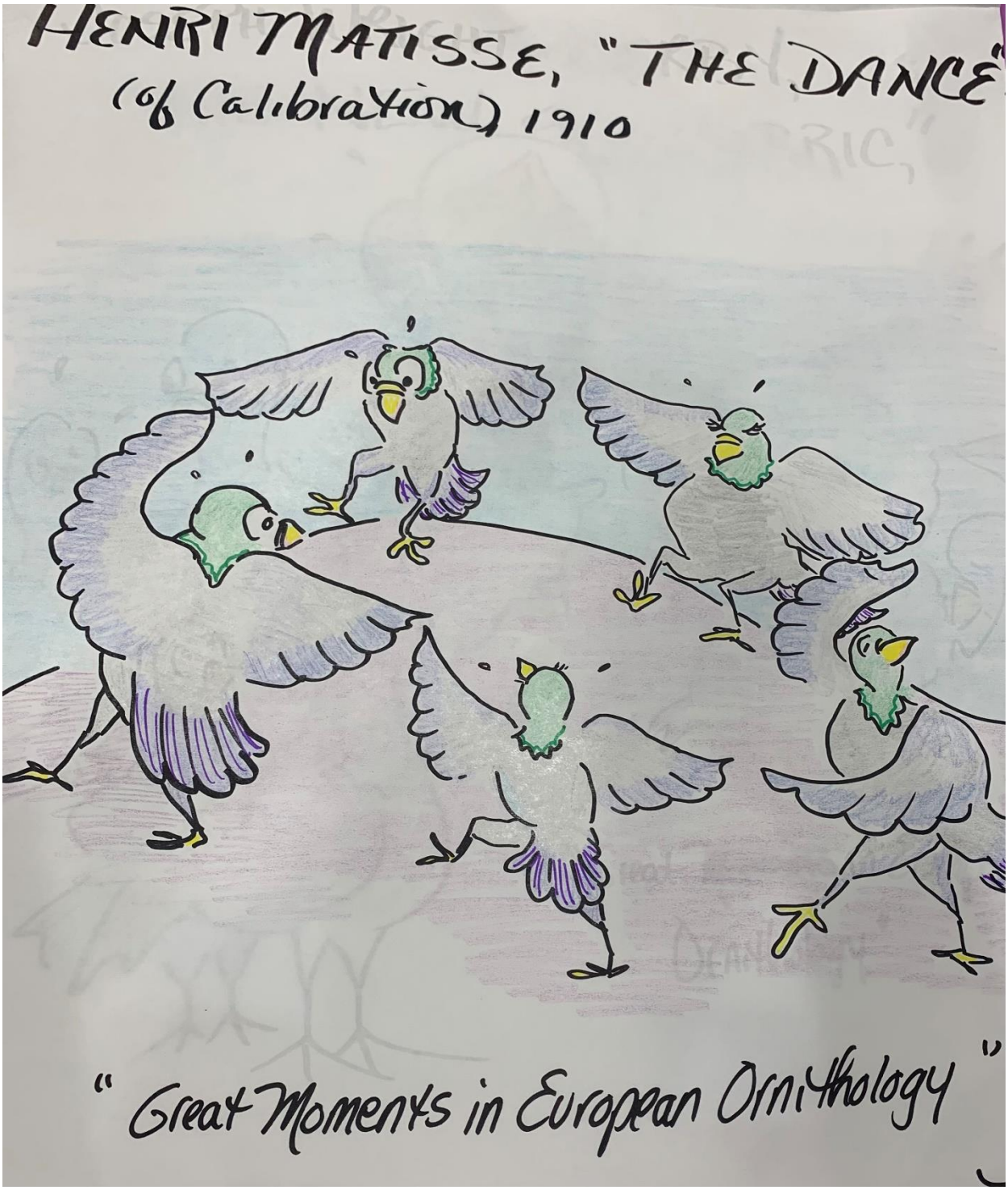
HENRI MATISSE, "THE DANCE"
(of Calibration) 1910
" Great Moments in European Ornithology "

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of film in teaching history within the context of Advanced Placement European History (APEURO) and examines the implications for cultural and academic curricula. The research begins with an exploration of the complex relationship between cultural representation in film and its impact on educational frameworks, particularly through the lens of the College Board and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The primary objective of the study is to investigate how teachers use films in APEURO classrooms to enhance learning, focusing on both the pedagogical value and ethical considerations surrounding historical portrayals in films. Through qualitative methods, the study utilizes storytelling as a method of inquiry, reflecting on the positionality of educators and the responsibilities they bear in curating content. Thematic analysis of data from interviews with APEURO readers highlights key themes such as teachers as learners, teachers as educators, and the ethical use of films in the classroom. Findings emphasize the importance of film in fostering historical empathy, engaging students creatively, and facilitating deeper understanding, while also considering the limitations and ethical concerns that arise in the process. This study offers insights into how films can effectively blend academic and cultural history, as well as the challenges faced by teachers in navigating the intersection of entertainment, education, and historical metanarratives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The inspiration for a research project focusing on the use of film in Advanced Placement (AP) European History (APEURO) classrooms began during the 2021-2022 school year. At the time I was a classroom teacher at a high school in Orlando, Florida and an adjunct history professor for a sizeable state college. I made prolific use of film in my classrooms, either showing full feature length movies, utilizing short clips or scenes, or just making references to movies during class discussions and lectures. One student even started keeping count of how many movie references I made during class. According to him my record is 11 different movies mentioned in one 75-minute session. Two specific developments occurred within the College Board curriculum in the 2021-2022 school year to move my love of and interest in teaching with film toward a desire for a research project focusing on other teachers' stories on their attitude toward movies in their classroom. These developments are the AP Capstone Seminar[1] stimulus packet that included a video as a primary document and the announcement of a new, as of the 2024-2025 school year, African American Studies (AFAM) course that included a standard dedicated to film.

In 2022 Seminar used a video-based document, *The Song of Freedom at the Estonian Song and Dance Festival* by Nikon Europe (hereafter referred to as Nikon, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCDsPbUORtc), in that year's stimulus packet. Seminar is the first year of a two-year Capstone program designed to teach interdisciplinary research methods to high school students. These courses were piloted during the 2015-2016 school year and made nationally available for 2016-2017. I started teaching year two of that program,

[1] Hereafter Capstone Seminar will be referred to as *Seminar*. Capstone Research will be referred to as *Research*. When referring to both, I will use *Capstone Program*.

Research, in 2017-2018, and year one, Seminar in 2020-2021. This rounded out my AP course load which already included AP World History (APWORLD) and APEURO. The Seminar stimulus packet is a collection of seven documents distributed by the College Board for students to utilize in their final essay (referred to as Task 2) to be submitted to the College Board by April 30 of each school year. The use of seven documents provided by the College Board in some ways reflects the APEURO, APWORLD, and AP United States History (APUSH) exams in that students are expected to integrate the provided sources into their essays as evidence to back explicit claims. On the AP history exams, this is the Document Based Question (DBQ). Task 2, unlike the various AP history exams, is not a timed essay, but a semester long research project. In this, the structure of Task 2 seems more equitable for students who otherwise might struggle with the format of standardized time-pressure exams.

Upon seeing the College Board's use of Nikon my mind began to wonder about the possibilities for this type of source on the APEURO or APWORLD exams. Nikon could easily fit in a DBQ on nationalism, the fall of the Soviet Union, the role of culture in resistance movements, or the Cold War. These topics are listed in the APEURO Course and Exam Description (see apcentral.collegeboard.org). The following year, the Seminar packet again included a video source *How to Build a Resilient Future Using Ancient Wisdom* by Julia Watson (hereafter referred to as Watson, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DOOJx7AZfM). Watson would fit in well with APWORLD course themes on globalization, ancient societies, proliferation of technology, and regionalism (see apcentral.collegeboard.org). These developments in Seminar documents presented in video format started me thinking about ways to modernize the AP history courses in ways that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge without the pressure of high-stake timed exams. Why must the history courses remain stuck in

the past? What if we could use video documents as primary sources for the AP history exams?

Around the same time that Seminar began using video-based sources, College Board announced that it would be adding an African American Studies (AFAM) course to the AP social studies curriculum. This course was developed during the 2021-2022 school year, to be piloted over two years beginning with 60 schools, then expanding to over 150 schools, and finally released nationwide for the 2024-2025 school year. In looking over the course and exam guide (see apcentral.collegeboard.org) standard 4.21 stood out to me (see **Figure 1** below).

This standard explicitly identifies films, citing *Black Panther* (2018) and *Star Trek* (1966-1969) as part of the AFAM curriculum for addressing cultural representation through Afrofuturism. What might this look like if adopted into AP history courses? I had utilized *The Time Machine* (2002) in APEURO as cultural representation through popular media both in film and for the original source material of the Industrial Revolution Great Britain. Developments with AFAM seem to suggest there are opportunities to rethink what we are doing in all AP history courses.

I have seen this occur in my Capstone courses. When students select and shape their own research, some gravitate toward film. My students may have been influenced by my own preference for film as a tool of analysis, but many colleagues who also teach Capstone have said

4.21 Black Studies, Black Futures, and Afrofuturism	*Let's Talk about "Black Panther" and Afrofuturism* (video, 2:45) Nichelle Nichols as Uhura in the *Star Trek* episode, "A Piece of the Action," 1968 Poster for the film *Space Is the Place*, circa 1974 "Culture Zone; Black to the Future," by Walter Mosley, *The New York Times*, 1998	1D 3A	1

Figure 1

the same thing. Three student projects stick out as successful examples of integrating mainstream movies into research deemed acceptable by College Board. The first student project used qualitative methods in coding two films *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016) and *American Sniper* (2014) to demonstrate disguised pro-war messaging within films marketed as anti-war. The second student project analyzed popular misinterpretations of anti-fascist messaging in three 1990s films, *Fight Club* (1999), *Starship Troopers* (1997), and *American History X* (1998) as it connected to the rise of the alt-right in online spaces.[2] The third student project applied a feminist analysis of the animated movie *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) in comparison with the live-action remake *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) as a commentary on corporate power coopting progressive language in their marketing. All three of these projects involved deep dives into film analysis and included historiography and contextualized primary source analysis. This leads me to consider, in recognizing that motivated high school students can create projects such as these, would it be in the interest of all classroom learners to engage with this level of media literacy when learning history? How useful are these skills within the current structures of courses like APEURO?

My most consistent experience throughout my professional career as an educator is with APEURO. Developments in APUSH, APWORLD, Seminar, Capstone, and the upcoming AFAM fascinate me, and I watch those developments with rapt attention; however, it is APEURO that I know best in terms of curriculum, the exam, and the scoring process. As I start

[2] It is worth pointing out that given the violent and sexual content of these films, many teachers would not think them appropriate for the high school setting. The student justified choosing these films as part of her research to get past the school's Internal Review Board (IRB). She made the case that graphic books are common in English courses and therefore film should have similar considerations when engaging in political commentary found in popular media. Key to this assertion is that she was watching these films on her own time outside of the classroom with parental permission. This type of debate on the appropriateness of film content became a major theme of my project as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5. I also find it interesting that *American History X* (1998) came up during data collection.

to reconsider APEURO from the perspective of an education researcher, I look to my colleagues who remain in the classroom. Do they have similar hopes and dreams for remaking and reworking APEURO to fit in with a more modern age? Do they push back against the rigidity of the College Board curriculum and embrace the cultural explorations within a course framework that does not value popular media in the way Seminar, Capstone, and AFAM appear to do? Have they also shared moments of cultural understanding and exploration with their students despite the dictates of APEURO course design?

Except for AFAM which is still in the pilot stage, APEURO is the smallest of the AP social studies exams. In the past, about 100,000 APEURO exams were taken each year and scored by between 400-500 APEURO raters. Those numbers have been in steady decline over the past 10 years, while the other social studies AP courses are growing.[3] By comparison, APUSH hosts nearly 1200 raters to score approximately 300,000 exams. AP Human Geography (APHUMAN) and APWORLD each almost double that. (See the College Board course descriptions https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/course-index-page). The decline of APEURO makes sense for several reasons. First, APEURO is typically an elective course. In my experience as an AP teacher in a Florida public school, APEURO was pursued mostly by students attempting to pad the stats of their college applications. It was not unusual to have sections with eight or nine students, whereas I once had an APWORLD section overflowing with 44 students. Second, to increase diversity in representative curriculum, several school districts have begun pushing APWORLD over APEURO. Third, and somewhat related to the previous

[3] The approximate number of APEURO exams was 84,000. The number of readers was said to be 220 distributed (online) and 166 on-site. These numbers are not published, rather they come from internal ETS memos released to readers during the Summer Read of 2025 between June 1-June 9.

point, APEURO is a holdover from a mid-20th century curriculum design that reflects a continued favoritism toward White history as the basis for American education. The establishment of APEURO shortly after the initial AP programs mirrored Cold War fears reflected in various 20th century education initiatives such as the National Defense Education Act (1958) or Nation at Risk (1983) that insisted American students have a grounding in the White European origins of the American system. This was also part of a backlash to efforts on the part of the federal government to enforce racial desegregation in schools. This is backed by research that will be explored further in chapter 2. Of all the AP social studies courses offered, APEURO stands out in its regional specificity within the American education system. As of the 2024-2025 school year there are no plans for an AP-Latin American history, AP-Asian history, or AP-African history. There is no other ethnic based AP social studies course until AFAM becomes nationally available during the 2024-2025 school year. The limitations of the APEURO curriculum have been addressed over the years to better represent the diversity of Europe, and by extension, encourage more student diversity in APEURO classrooms. Past exams have been described as knowledge checks about the political and military histories of the UK, France, and Germany with an occasional nod towards Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Russia. More recent exams show efforts to broaden examinations of cultural diversity by widening the geographic focus to include more southern and eastern Europe, i.e. Turkey, Poland, the Baltic states, the Balkans, and Greece, as well as thematic topics that include migration, cultural developments, and minoritized issues.[4]

[4] There is a notable shift on the multiple-choice questions, LEQs and SAQs to attempt more diversity in topics and regions represented particularly starting in 2010; however, the DBQ, the portion of the exam that is the most direct engagement with primary sources remains limited in terms of representation. Previous exams available at apcentral.collegeboard.org.

Broader representation within the APEURO curriculum is important; however, the larger issue remains the structure of the AP history exam which continues to emphasize a facts-based approach to history over historical thinking skills. Moreover, the cultural curriculum that values student knowledge and experiences is mostly absent from the APEURO End of Course exam (EOC). What the Capstone program offers that APEURO and other AP History courses do not is a chance to allow students to highlight, explore, and analyze history on their own terms and from their own perspectives within a framework of research skills and methods. The Capstone program's emphasis on project-based learning and assessment is a step toward the democratization of learning that seeks to unleash student potential for developing historical thinking skills. It is at this point that I return to film. When it comes to bridging the gap between a wide array of American identities, film has traditionally had a powerful influence. The common experience of watching a mainstream cinematic feature film intended for a mass consumer base (as opposed to the targeted and at times limited appeal of a history or cultural documentary) I believe is the essence of a s*ocial* study, a though echoed by many of my social studies colleagues. As will be discussed further in chapter 2, there is research on the use of film in a history classroom demonstrating that mainstream popular cinema is a common tool for history instruction and learning. Teachers in APEURO and other AP history courses consistently employ film for instruction even though no film is included on the EOC. The simple question then is, why? Why do APEURO teachers choose to use film for instruction? This is why I have chosen to focus on film as a classroom tool to explore the thoughts, strategies, goals, and experiences of APEURO teachers.

Background to the Problem: Part I – An Odd Culture Group and Our Movies

In June 2020, I participated in the APEURO summer session (hereafter called the Read)

to score student essays from that year's EOC. For the first time since I had joined the Read in 2006 as gig worker for the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the Read took place via the Online Network Evaluation system (hereafter called the ONE). COVID-19 had shut down the nation and much of the world in March of 2020, putting severe restrictions on travel. For the previous decade, the Read for APEURO had taken place in the Kansas City convention center; however, in 2020, such mass gatherings were now unsafe, impractical, borderline illegal, and at the very least, based on our knowledge at the time, unethical and amoral. Coordination amongst ETS hierarchy took place via ZOOM meetings, chat functions on the ONE, text messages, and phone calls. For the first time the Read was entirely remote.

I had worked with the ONE before when it was first introduced as a tool for remote scoring in 2016. The trial run involved only the Short Answer Question (SAQ) portion of the exam. The more involved Document Based Question (DBQ) and Long Essay Questions (LEQ) were to be integrated into the ONE system in subsequent years. ETS announced the ONE as a tool for readers (renamed *raters* on ONE) to participate in scoring from home by providing student responses digitally. Raters would no longer travel to the onsite Read. This made AP scoring more accessible, as readers with family obligations, disabilities, or other travel restrictions could score from home and not be limited by the need to spend a week (or two in the case of the sample selection committee) onsite. For many of us who had been part of the annual Read for a decade or more, we saw the ONE as marking the end of an era. The practical applications of the ONE seemed to many of us, even before COVID-19, to be a corporate cost cutting tool so ETS could save money on airfare, hotel stays, and food provided to during the Read. The choosing the ONE over an in-person Read may be economically rational; however, for many veterans of the Read, it meant our professional connections and friendships that only

existed through this annual gathering were likely to fade away.

While scoring at home on the ONE in 2020, and again in 2021, we did our best to continue the social aspects of the Read. In Kansas City, a typical day of scoring ends promptly at 5pm after which many of us would see to personal business, hit the gym, eat dinner in the communal cafeteria, and maybe grab a quick nap before joining our colleagues at happy hour. Many professional and personal connections have been made and solidified at Kansas City's many watering holes. In 2020, scoring on the ONE during lockdown in our homes and spread out across the United States, we hosted a virtual happy hour on ZOOM. This was a poor substitute for the collegial interactions that take place in person; however, for many of us in the summer of 2020, this was a much-needed social connection in a time marked by uncertainty and loneliness. In keeping up with tradition, after some catching up, a bit of griping about the workday, and a few drink refills, we began our movie game.

The rules for our movie game are relatively simple and can be played with any size crowd. Whoever goes first says an actor's name, places that actor in a movie, and then names another actor in that same movie. The next participant then takes that second actor, places that actor in a different movie, and then names another actor in the new movie. This is an example:

Participant 1: Mark Addy was in *Time Machine* (2002) with Guy Pierce.

Participant 2: Guy Pierce was in *The Count of Monte Cristo* with Richard Harris

Participant 3: Richard Harris was in *Cromwell* with Alec Guiness

And so forth. The rules are that the same actor cannot be named more than once in a round. Rather than being a competitive game, it is meant to be cooperative. The idea is to see how long we can go before someone either does not know the actor that is named or cannot place that actor in a new movie. If one person fails to continue the chain, that round is over for

everyone. Among my cohort at the Read we have had rounds that last almost an hour. Inevitably, as the evening progresses, this game serves as a starting point for exploring any topic related to movies including (but not limited to), our favorite films, actor's careers, films we have seen recently, film releases we are anticipating, heated discussions about sequels, remakes, casting choices, directors, and, of course, films we like to use in our classrooms. It is this predictable return to classroom practices as part of the discussion that illustrates our closest connection with each other as readers. Everyone at the Read is or was a classroom teacher.

Approximately one-third of readers are college history professors, the rest are or have been high school AP European history teachers. Connection to the classroom, whether teaching undergraduates or high school students, gives us a common professional link that shapes social interactions. No matter how deep we get into after-hours social activities, we never seem to wander too far from discussions about our classrooms. We are professional educators. That is our identity. That is the foundation upon which our friendships are renewed at the Read year after year. The Read is a culture group, insular in its exclusionary criteria for participation, as you must be or have been a European history classroom teacher. The Read is gig work, a financial consideration that has become increasingly important for educators; however, for many who come back year after year, it is for professional connections and comradery. We are fellow history nerds who like to talk about our classrooms and, in the case of my circle of friends, like to discuss movies we show in class.

For my colleagues at the Read, our classroom practices are, at least in part, shaped by after-hours conversations about movies. Whether we are addressing history channel classics like *Paths of Glory* (1957), more recent releases like the latest *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2023), or super-hero action films like *Wonder Woman* (2017) we cannot help but bring it back to stories

about the time we showed a movie or a clip from a movie in class. This usually starts with something like “I stopped showing the beach scene from *Saving Private Ryan* (1997). Students today just can’t handle it anymore” or “The execution scene in *Cromwell* (1970), I really think that is a powerful moment for students to see.” Even our yearly tradition of going to the Kansas City downtown movie theater The Alamo where we would watch the latest blockbuster release would bring us back to discussions of X-Men as an analogy for the American Civil Rights Era or the history of Godzilla films as expressions of the fear of atomic warfare. Many times, I would relive versions of these conversations with my students in the subsequent school year.

2024 marks the 18th year in a row I will participate in the Read, now back in person as of 2022. Since COVID-19, much has changed as the national lockdown forced ETS to roll out the ONE system to score the full exam. This in turn fast-tracked ETS’s plans for the ONE to push more of the Read online as a cost cutting measure. Much of the Read remains remote; however, a reduced cohort of readers still return to Kansas City each summer. Luckily for me, many of my longtime friends and colleagues at the Read decided to return. And yet it feels like the Read is dying. For better or worse, the ONE is consistently moving to replace on-site activities, limiting the social dynamics of the Read and keeping the new batch of readers at home. Happy-hour conversations and professional connections continue, but the future of this odd and niche culture group is in doubt. Like the quotation from *Up in the Air* (2009) that opened this section, we are following the corporate model and slowly being grounded. The professional and the collegial aspects of the education gig economy are likewise fading away. As if to symbolize our increasingly isolated world, we returned to Kansas City to find The Alamo had closed during COVID.

Background to the Problem Part 2: What is College Board, ETS, and the Read

> **Captain Miller** (Played by Tom Hanks)**:** I'm a schoolteacher. I teach English Composition in this little town called Addley, Pennsylvania. The last eleven years, I've been at Thomas Alva Edison High School. I was coach of the baseball team in the springtime.
> **Sergeant Horvath** (Played by Tom Sizemore)*:* I'll be doggone.
> **Captain Miller:** Back home when I tell people what I do for a living, they think, well, that, that figures. But over here its a big, a big mystery.
> - *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)

Participating in the Read is the best lesson on the inner workings and systematic elements involved in scoring the EOC. Experienced readers inevitably adjust their teaching to better prepare their students to take the EOC. This can be seen as *teaching to the test,* which can have a negative impact on classroom creativity and learning for the sake of learning. At the same time, knowledge of the assembly-line like elements of the AP scoring process helps to guide teachers in ways to outthink the system and maintain joy in the learner-based classroom. Artistic expression, of which movies can play an important role, is one small, yet important, facet in that negotiation. To understand this negotiation that every AP teacher-reader must maintain, it is worth looking into the structural aspects of ETS and the Read.

I should note here that this is not a study of neoliberalism and various aspects of corporate privatization of education through institutions such as College Board and ETS; however, a brief discussion of neoliberalism as reflected in the profit and production driven aspects of the AP system is necessary to address factors shaping the AP classroom and the practices of AP teachers. Neoliberalism is an ideology of "political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). Neoliberal ideals promote free-market capitalism, while advocating for deregulation as well as reducing government spending. This

emphasis on freedom and individualism opposes collectivism seeking to limit government services providing social welfare. A government's role is restricted only to actions that support free-market capitalism and the privatization of social welfare programs like education or healthcare key tenets of neoliberal expansions of government (Coker, 2022). The neoliberal turn in education envisioned schools as failed businesses and teachers as failed employees in need of correction. Under this neoliberal turn, teachers, and in the case of AP, readers, have been commodified so that they were considered goods and services to be exchanged (Ball, 2004).

The neoliberal turn is evident in corporate side of AP programs. The Read is a money-making venture that advertises college readiness while cutting labor costs in the pursuit of economic efficiency. This is reflected in the recent move to make the Read fully remote via the ONE. Informally, readers recognize, and often discuss, this as part of an ongoing battle between viewing teachers as cogs in a factor system and the image of a teacher as, what Marie Brennan (2009) describes as:

> the artist, the intellectual, the community worker, the technician.... The contrast between the ideal teacher of the neoliberal, human capital approach and teachers' lived realities is significant (Brennan, 2009, p. 355).

The interplay between ETS's regulation of the Read and the experiences, attitudes, and actions of readers demonstrates this battle in action. ETS is the largest private non-profit testing services in the world (See https://www.etsglobal.org/fr/en/content/who-we-are). This designation as a non-profit can be somewhat misleading. As explained by an Oregon State provost Joe Boeckenstedt (2023):

> *Not-for-profit* does not mean that it's altruistic in its purpose; it simply means that excess revenue as profit is not distributed to private owners or shareholders but rather held by the company... [College Board] uses the results of the tests (for which half the students and half the school districts will, by definition, be below

> average) to promote its AP courses, to make students more "college ready" (an essentially meaningless term it invented) (https://slate.com/human-interest/2023/02/college-board-ap-florida-curriculum.html).

Founded by the College Board in 1947, ETS is the executive branch that oversees the Read for all AP exams including the social studies courses APUSH, APWORLD, Economics (APECON), Government (APGOV), APHUMAN, APEURO, and AFAM. The College Board is the professional academic side of AP and is responsible for designing curriculum, distributing resources, providing professional development, and creating multiple versions of the AP exams including the various essay questions (SAQs, LEQs, and DBQs) that will be scored at the Read. There is the Operational exam (form O), Alternate exam (form A), and various pilot versions of the exam (usually form Z, but there are several other designations used) which are in a trial run for future form O exams. Forms A and Z are considered secret exams in that they are not publicly released and those responsible for scoring them sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) as part of their employment contract. Each year Form O is made available on the College Board website three days after students have taken the exam (See, https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-european-history/exam).

Some of the specific processes of the Read are private and readers are partially bound by employment contracts; however, the procedural aspects of the Read are open to public discussion (see, ETS.org employment opportunities for AP readers).[5] The hierarchy of this gig work starts with the chief reader. For APEURO, this position has always been held by a full-time professional historian from a university. Below the Chief Reader are two assistant chief readers,

[5] The contract between ETS and readers focuses mostly on content rather than the procedural aspects of the Read. Violating the terms is not actionable unless there is explicit harm done to the College Board, ETS, employees, or students. In my experience this has never come up in any public way; however, perceived violations are handled by simply not inviting readers to return. This rarely involves documentation as ETS employees are considered independent contractors. See, Watson 2021.

who in the past five years are both experienced high school teachers. The professional historian provides academic validity while the high school teachers provide structure and bureaucratic monitoring. Below the assistant chief readers are the Exam leaders, one each for forms O, A, and Z. Next are the questions leaders, one each for the 4 SAQs, 3 LEQs, and 1 DBQ on each version of the exam. Under the question leaders are the table leaders who round out the management side of the Read (hereafter collectively referred to as the Leadership).[6] The Leadership begins the pre-Read on May 28th, five days before the Read, as part of the initial review of that year's exam questions and student responses. From this review the Leadership creates a standardized rubric for each essay question on each separate exam. No scoring of exams takes place during the pre-Read; however, the Leadership reads thousands of student responses to gauge typical answers. From this assessment of what is *typical* a rubric is created. The goal is to set a scoring bar wherein roughly half of the responses will pass and roughly half will not. The best description I have heard from a fellow reader is that these essays are being ranked rather than graded.[7]

Table leaders are responsible for overseeing training once the readers arrive on June 2nd to begin the Read.[8] The readers are supposed to be responsible for most of the scoring of the AP exams with Leadership performing back reading, also called accuracy checks, to ensure the readers are following the rubric and maintaining consistent scoring standards; however, in the past few years more and more scoring is being done by the Leadership to make up for decreased

[6] It is worth noting that although the Leadership is responsible for managerial aspects of the Read, they are still gig workers. There is no difference in hourly pay between readers and the Leadership up through Question Leader. The only difference is that Leadership works, and therefore is paid, 5 more days than readers. The term "Leadership" is in common use at the Read.
[7] This "ranking" rather than "grading" exams is unofficial. At the 2024 Read, College Board leadership announced a push to increase pass rates by adjusting the standards. It is more typical now for up to 70% of students to pass the AP exam.
[8] The dates of the Read have not changed in the time I have been a reader or in leadership except for the delayed Read caused by COVID-19 in 2020.

productivity of at-home scoring taking place via ONE. I know this anecdotally from an experience a few years ago wherein as a member of the Leadership I ended up scoring an entire SAQ question (approximately 1500 responses) on a form Z exam by myself with no back check. This is supposed to be against ETS policy; however, no one seemed to notice or care so long as the standard pass rate is maintained.

Both the Pre-Read and the Read maintain a consistent 8am to 5pm workday with two 15-minute breaks (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) and a one-hour lunch break. For readers, this means seven straight days (including weekends) of scoring AP exams. For leadership it is 12 days, which often includes the Memorial Day holiday. This can be exhausting and mind-numbing work to read student responses for the same exam question over and over, hour after hour, day after day. The question hits many readers at some point during this ordeal: why do we keep doing this year after year? The gig-work pay is $34 per hour, which was decent pay for me as a graduate student trying to get by on a $19,000 a year stipend. The $3,500 from ETS was usually enough to get me through the summer. Many readers have similar origins for why they began attending the Read; however, many who still attend the Read after COVID are more established in their careers and the money is less of a factor. The only answer I can come up with, echoed by many of us who have been scoring for a decade or more, is that we return because of the comradery. Completing the Read is a monumental task that can only be accomplished by dedicated teamwork. The mutual connection between readers is a shared feeling of victory when the long, and often arduous, task is complete. Until that point, we find ways to keep each other going.

Something the College Board and ETS have tried and often failed to control are the antics of readers trying to maintain their morale during this long and trying process. Without

implicating myself, my friends, or any participants in this study, I can say boredom and monotony will make any professional teacher as immature and childish as the students those same professional educators have had in the classroom. One of the most common practices is to share funny student responses. With over 400,000 essays there are students who give up and write something completely irrelevant (and at times irreverent) for their response. I have seen students write poems, song lyrics, personal letters to the anonymous AP reader either thanking them or taunting them for being inside on what must be a beautiful day outside. Sometimes there are intricate drawings or detailed life stories. For a few years there were Facebook groups of students who coordinated nationwide to write specific movie quotations like "This is Sparta" or "Why so serious" at the end of each essay. It seems thousands of students participated as I read response after response with those concluding lines. In more than a few instances there have been entire essays wherein a student rants about their teacher or against the College Board system. Sharing these moments with colleagues at our table often comes as a welcome break in the workday, even if ETS deems this bad for production. When I first started scoring, some table leaders would bring in poster paper and write funny student responses for all to see. This practice was clamped down on by ETS and is now explicitly banned at the Read.[9] Another form of entertainment that is now forbidden by ETS is scoring competitions. In the past, the Chief reader would give awards for the fastest reader, the most accurate scorer, and the acorn award for the best new reader. Informally we would have speed-scoring competitions at our tables or with friends. It was a particular point of pride to read fast and not have any *dings*, meaning leadership

[9] Rightfully so in my opinion. Regardless of the need for levity, publicly making fun of student responses I believe is going too far. Just because we did not know who the student was does not make these actions appropriate. Still, this sort of misbehavior is part of the comradery of the readers. ETS now includes this explicit prohibition in the opening day announcements.

did not back read our essays and change our scores. This competitive nature is discouraged by ETS as management consistently emphasized that accuracy, not speed, is what matters; however, it is widely believed that ETS is more than willing to turn a blind eye if these competitions increase productivity without disrupting the pass rate.

Keeping readers in line appears to us readers to be the main job of ETS. This is why there is such a determined process for developing scoring standards and rubrics, maintaining the hierarchy of checks and back checks to ensure readers are on standard, and reigning in the antics of bored readers. There are a few ETS and College Board representatives present at the Read to oversee production. While they will preach about accuracy, the goal has and always will be productivity.

The idea is to maintain the appearance of a quality product, in this case exams worthy of college credit, while cutting expenses and protecting the corporate line of the College Board. This is why the ONE seems like a rational cost cutting move for ETS. With the Read going remote, ETS saves on expenses and avoids the liability of having onsite readers. The problem is that readers are much less efficient and productive when working from home. In my experience, online readers are only about half as productive as an in-person reader.[10] For all the distracting antics in-person readers get up to at their tables, a reader at home, isolated from the professional community, has all the distractions of their normal life around them. An in-person reader has no choice but to score essays all day. The at-home reader can work shorter shifts, watch television while scoring, or take a day off entirely. At home readers may deal with family and pets in the

[10] I admit this is my own arbitrary assessment that cannot be backed by data as ETS does not release those statistics. I should also note that there are plenty of readers on-site who are inefficient and many at home who can be very productive. I am only speaking of trends I have witnessed in my position as Leadership.

same household whereas in-person readers are locked away in the Kansas City convention center and go home to a single hotel room. These are a few explanations for why remote scoring via the ONE is less productive than the in-person Read. To make up for the limited productivity of home readers, ETS has put more pressure on Leadership to fill in the gaps by having us directly scoring student responses rather than back checking the accuracy of remote readers. If accuracy is the goal, pulling leadership away from back reading is counter to achieving that goal.

Seeming contradictions in policies and reader complaints about College Board and ETS has not stopped readers from coming back. There are those of us who continue to return year after year to live in an APEURO summer camp. Why? If we do not need the money and we have reason to gripe over ETS policies, then what keeps us coming back? I cannot, nor do I seek to answer that question for the entire on-site readership; however, for my circle of colleagues I can only say it is our professional and personal connections. It is an emotional moment each year to see each other and a bittersweet separation when the Read ends. Like Captain Miller at the opening of this section, we may live entirely different lives at home than we present at the Read. Whatever professional shifts have occurred that may have taken us away from AP Euro or European history college courses, for these 12 days, we are APEURO readers. There are fewer in-person readers each year; moreover, there are less new readers who will ever get to experience the professional and personal connections established by us longtime readers. As the AP world becomes more digital, the word *remote* seems an apt description of what is happening in our professional and personal communities.

Statement of the Problem

AP history teachers are caught between two worlds, that of a college-level history instructor and that of a hired tutor prepping students for the exam. There is limited research

exploring how AP teachers navigate the expectations of the system in which they work. The growing literature on teacher experiences seems to avoid AP teachers as if they live in an alternative reality from their colleagues, which in many ways they do. These teachers may in fact teach a variety of courses outside of APEURO including but not limited to different AP social studies courses, non-AP social studies, college-level history courses, or non-social studies; however, they all chose to be APEURO readers. The College Board policy limits readers to one subject at a time, and, year after year, these participants have designated themselves as APEURO readers first. This study explores how these APEURO readers view their own classroom, course content, and shape historical narratives. The medium for this discussion is film as a representation of these teachers' view of cinema as art, as knowledge, and as a starting point for critical media literacy; however, the larger point is to use film and film-based practices as a medium for exploring the experiences, stories, and perspectives of APEURO readers and teachers to add to the growing literature on distinct classroom cultures.

Purpose and Scope of this Study

Film plays a significant role in American society and has become a common tool in the classroom for engaging students with historical content. When teachers incorporate films into their lessons, they draw on both a shared cultural experience and the unique dynamics of their specific classrooms. Narrative inquiry provides a framework for understanding how educators interpret and integrate these films, offering insight into the ways their teaching practices are influenced by the films they show. For APEURO teachers, this process is particularly complex, as they navigate the intersection of secondary education and college-level history instruction. This study focuses on experienced APEURO teachers, exploring how they use film to shape their understanding of historical events and how these films, in turn, influence their teaching practices.

It also investigates the beliefs these educators hold about the AP curriculum and how those beliefs affect their ability to incorporate films into their classrooms. The following research questions guide this investigation:

Research Questions

1. How do APEURO readers construct an understanding of historical events from films?
2. How do/did APEURO readers understanding of historical events shaped by films impact their teaching practices?
3. What beliefs concerning the AP curriculum do APEURO readers hold that help or hinder their ability to use film in the classroom?

Definition of Terms

History Sources and Strategies

- *Cinema/Film/Movie:* A work of visual art that simulates experiences and communicates ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere through moving images. There is a recognized difference between these terms within film studies; however, for this study's purposes, the terms cinema, film, and movie may be used interchangeably. The reason for this is to allow participants to define these terms based on how they choose to use them (Russell, 2017).
- *Learner*: Post-structural understanding is that all classroom stakeholders are learners. This contrasts with structural definitions of education research wherein emphasis is placed on distinctions between researchers, educators, and students. Conceptualizing and prioritizing learning blurs identities by placing value on all knowledge and the knowledge evaluation process (Erickson, 1986; Marczyk, 2022).
- *Historical Thinking*: A practice that encourages engagement with primary sources

through asking questions, thinking critically, making reasoned inferences, and developing reasoned explanations and interpretations of events and issues in the past and present (Mandell, 2008).

- *Primary Source*: A first-hand account of the event being studied. In the history classroom, primary sources are typically defined as documents or images directly connected to a historical event. For this study, any first-hand account is considered a primary source including teacher stories (Mandell, 2008).
- *Secondary Source*: A second-hand account of the event being studied. Any telling or retelling of an event wherein the author of that account was not present is considered a secondary source (Mandell, 2008).

Advanced Placement Courses, Exams, and Structure

- *Advanced Placement (AP)*: Courses provided by the College Board wherein high school students can earn college credit by passing an End of Course Exam (EOC). Most state universities accept AP scores of 3 or above (apcentral.collegeboard.org).
- *AP End of Course Exam (EOC)*: The EOC is given to all AP students to determine if they earn college credit. Typically, the EOC is not connected to classroom grades. There are three standard forms of the EOC including the Operational (form-O), Alternate (form-A), and the pilot exam (form-Z and other designations). Form-O EOCs take place in May of each school year. Possible scores are as follows:
    - NR – A blank exam was submitted
    - 1 – Failure to demonstrate knowledge of the content
    - 2 – Limited proficiency with course content
    - 3 – Proficiency with course content. This is typically the lowest score considered

passing by most state universities

  - 4 – High Proficiency with course content
  - 5 – Mastery of course content

- *College Board*: The overarching non-profit corporation responsible for designing the AP curriculum, providing professional development materials, and creating AP exams (apcentral.collegeboard.org).
- *Document Based Question (DBQ)*: The portion of the AP history exams consisting of seven primary source documents. The intent is to demonstrate student aptitude with interpreting documents and utilizing sources to formulate a historical argument. Score points are as follows:
  - Thesis
  - Establishing an argument
  - Correctly interpreting at least three documents
  - Backing the argument with evidence from six documents
  - Backing the argument with evidence beyond the documents
  - Sourcing at least two documents
  - Demonstrating historical analysis
- *Educational Testing Service (ETS)*: The administrative branch of the College Board responsible for administering and scoring the AP exams according to College Board standards (ETS.org)
- *The Leadership*: A gig-worker participant in the Read responsible for designing rubrics and monitoring readers for accuracy in the standards. This includes the following administrative hierarchy:

    - Chief Reader (CR)
    - Assistant Chief Readers (ACR)
    - Exam Leaders (EL)
    - Question Leaders (QL)
    - Table Leaders (TL)
- *Long Essay Question (LEQ)*: The portion of the AP history exam consisting of a free response prompt. Most recently, history AP exams provide three prompts from which the student must respond to one. Score points are as follows:
    - Thesis
    - Establishing an argument
    - Demonstrating two pieces of historical knowledge relevant to the prompt
    - Backing the argument with two pieces of historical evidence
    - Demonstrating one form of historical analysis
    - Demonstrating a second form of historical analysis
- Online Network Evaluation (ONE): The digital medium by which AP exams are scanned and distributed to remote readers for online scoring. This was piloted for APEURO in 2016. It handles scoring all the Operational exams as of 2020.
- *Short Answer Question (SAQ)*: There are four free response SAQs on the AP history exams each containing three short prompts that require historical evidence to answer. Question one, which provides a secondary source, and question two, which provides a primary source, must be answered. The student then chooses either question three or question four. Scoring for each question is as follows:
    - 1 - Answering one part correctly

    - 2 - Answering two parts correctly
    - 3 - Answering three parts correctly
- *The Read*: The annual ETS event wherein hundreds of AP teachers and college professors are brought together to read through and score the essay portion of the AP exam. For AP European History there are approximately 400 Readers who score approximately 100,000 exams containing approximately 400,000 essays.
- *Reader:* A participant in the Read responsible for scoring most of the essay portions of the AP Exam.

Methods and Methodology

- *Constructivism*: An epistemological perspective that learners build upon their existing foundations of knowledge to learn new information (Erickson, 1986).
- *Cultural Curriculum*: A constructivist interpretation of historical thinking. The premise is that any historical source (primary, secondary, written, still image, or film) can only be understood through the lived experiences of an individual or as part of a community group. For this study, the cultural curriculum under examination is that of AP teachers who attend the Read (Wineburg, 2007).
- *Narrative Inquiry*: A technique of analysis that qualitative researchers utilize to describe how participants see themselves and their experiences within a broader social and political context (Riessman, 2008).
- *Post-Structuralism*: An ontological approach to learning wherein there is no defined or definable objective truth beyond community contextualization. Understanding, and therefore learning, is organic and ever evolving through cultural, social, and historical interplay (Erickson, 1986).

Limitations

There are limitations to consider for this study. Participants are teachers previously known to me from the Read, but they are not all at one school. This allows me to bypass the gatekeepers of individual school districts as well as focus on APEURO experiences in a way that is more widespread than one school or geographic area; however, generalizing APEURO across a range states, schools, and classrooms lacks the power of a traditional ethnographic study that intimately examines one highly localized institution. A further limitation for this study is that narrative inquiry is not intended to inform practical strategies for the use of film in a social studies classroom. As I focus on individual teachers' stories and experiences, I make no attempt to offer generalizable practices for all social studies classrooms or teacher training programs for the use of film. APEURO is a small and increasingly isolated portion of AP social studies and the broader social studies education community. This is made even more restrictive by focusing on the AP readers who still attend the in-person Read at the Kansas City Convention center. The ability to attend the Read is a privileged position in terms of outside obligations and ability to travel, making this a select group. The advantage of this is that with such a small pool the experiences of these teachers are more connected. The disadvantage is that data collected from a niche culture group might not be scalable to other AP teachers or secondary teachers in general. Moreover, the participants selected for this study are very experienced, in some cases with decades of teaching experience making the results of this study difficult to link to practices of new teachers or pre-service training programs. This is particularly the case when considering the constructivist nature of this study and the valuation of participant narratives. Should the AP exam shift in structure toward a Capstone model, APEURO continue to decline in relevance, or the Read move fully to the ONE, then the conversations and stories shared here might likewise

fade in relevance in terms of classroom practices. Moreover, as is always the case when studying the impact of cultural markers like film, the narratives will change over time. The importance of this study lies in the limitation that by capturing moments through narratives we can understand the experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of participants; however, that moment is not to be repeated. This limitation expresses the essence of post-structural constructivist appreciation for the education profession and those who choose it as a career.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the literature that forms the foundation of this study. It covers several key areas, including the ontological and epistemological framework for analysis, an overview of the College Board's AP history curriculum and exams, and the role of film as a tool of both the academic and the cultural curriculum of social studies classrooms. I will also explore gaps in literature that this study seeks to fill. The central theme throughout is the ongoing negotiation between participants' roles as academics and educators and the demands of the College Board curriculum and EOC. Existing philosophy, theory, and research in the fields of history and pedagogy suggests that constructivist, learner-centered educational models may be constrained within institutional systems such as the AP social studies curriculum. Therefore, a review of this literature is necessary as a justification for this study and a rationale for my chosen methods which are outlined in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

My career in education has placed me at the epicenter of converging and at times conflicting ontological and epistemological experiences. I have been a history researcher, secondary classroom teacher, college history professor, AP reader, and in AP Leadership. Now I am a researcher in the field of theory and practice in teacher education (TPTE). The title of this field is appropriate as I have always had one foot in the theoretical realm of post-structural constructivism, defined by the perspective that learning is an evolving context-based process (Erickson, 1886), and the other rooted in contextualized pragmatism that focuses on real-world experiences and applicability (Dewey, 2018). Without the jargon, this means I try to think and

help learners view the big picture and yet still seek practical ways to teach my students.[11] In APEURO, this means I emphasized historical thinking and use of film as a medium for critical literacy; however, I also want my students to pass the EOC, which does not address film. These are at times contrasting goals emblematic of the conflict between the constructivist and the pragmatist.

There is a part of me, like many of my participants, that wants to instruct, teach, and lead students – whether they are students in the secondary social studies, college history, or pre-service education classroom – with instructional strategies from evidence-based practices that fit into the system; however, I have seen and experienced too much to believe that I have, could one day have, or should actively pursue a unified answer to the question of how we teach history. As has been said, *maybe teaching is a bad idea* (Spence, 2023). My ontology and epistemology are in a continuous process of shaping, breaking, and reforming. The more I learn, the less I believe I know about any true nature or systematic order defining connections between learners, society, and classroom culture. These connections are as unique as the individuals and mix of individuals that make up each classroom. Throughout much of my career, I have been asking the wrong questions in an attempt to define the lines that exist between students, teachers, and education researchers. This realization has led me inexorably to an ontological post-structural awakening in forming an epistemological framework of constructivism wherein those lines disappear. What this means for the learning process for understanding history is conceptualizing meta-narratives by seeking and encouraging engagement with contextualized cultural curriculum (White, 1973). In this case, film is a mechanism for sharing a cultural experience through which researchers,

[11] The language here is intentional in that a post-structural analysis of the classroom designates all participants as learners, whereas pragmatism maintains a hierarchy of teacher and student.

teachers, and students each bring individual interpretive lenses valued in the discourse of a classroom culture.

In understanding metanarratives in history, three major influences come to the forefront: Hayden White, a historian; Samuel Wineburg, a social studies education researcher and education psychologist; and Michel Foucault, a philosopher and historian. Each contributes to a broader understanding of how history is shaped and interpreted, with particular emphasis on the construction of historical narratives.

Hayden White and the Creation of Historical Narratives

One of the most significant contributions to the understanding of history as a metanarrative comes from historian Hayden White. In his seminal work *Metahistory* (1973), White argues that history is always shaped by those presenting it to fit a particular narrative. This idea asserts that anyone studying, researching, or writing about history, including filmmakers, is inherently engaging in the construction of a narrative (White, 1988). White suggests that historical narratives are not neutral accounts but are always influenced by the intentions of the historian or creator (White, 1973). These narratives, whether they seek to build connections, assign values, or identify key historical figures or trends, influence how history is understood. Thus, the creation of history is inseparable from the narratives that shape it.

White's theory challenges the notion of an objective history. As he contends, no historian or educator, whether in the classroom, in written works, or in film, can present history without simultaneously constructing a narrative. Furthermore, these narratives can differ significantly, as each serves a distinct purpose. The broader process of metahistory, as White frames it, involves examining why particular narratives are constructed and how they shape our understanding of the past. This understanding allows us to break down hegemonic histories that claim to be the

definitive version of historical events. From this standpoint we begin to view history from a more critical standpoint.

Samuel Wineburg and Historical Thinking

Samuel Wineburg's research further expands the understanding of metanarratives in history, particularly through the lens of historical thinking. In *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (2001), Wineburg introduces the concept of thinking like a historian, which emphasizes the active role of students and teachers in constructing historical narratives. According to Wineburg, history is not simply a collection of facts but is shaped by the narratives we create to make sense of the past. This narrative construction occurs through various forms of representation, such as writing, discussion, and even watching movies.

Wineburg (2001) argues that in the classroom, students engage in the construction of history through active participation. As they write essays, participate in discussions, or analyze films, they contribute to the ongoing development of historical narratives. This process is not only intellectual but also cultural, as it involves the values, assumptions, and perspectives brought into the classroom by both students and educators. The history being created within the classroom is shaped by the collective understanding of those who participate in the creation process, reinforcing the idea that history is a social construct (Wineburg, 2001).

Michel Foucault and the Power of Historical Representation

Michel Foucault provides another important theoretical framework for understanding metanarratives in history, particularly in relation to power and representation. Foucault's work on the history of knowledge and power suggests that historical narratives are not simply neutral accounts of the past, but rather representations shaped by societal norms and power structures. In his influential works, including *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault argues that

knowledge is always embedded within power relations, including historical narratives.

For Foucault (1972), institutions such as the educational system and exams, such as the APEURO curriculum and the EOC, play a crucial role in shaping which narratives are accepted as truth. He contends that the curriculum and examinations in educational systems represent the dominant cultural values, determining what is deemed acceptable historical knowledge. In this context, the AP European History exam is not an objective measure of historical facts but a representation of what fits within the accepted norms of academic civilization, shaped by power structures that dictate which historical narratives are acceptable (Foucault, 1972). The boundaries of what constitutes legitimate history are thus established by those in positions of power, and the exclusion of alternative narratives reinforces these structures.

The theories presented by White, Wineburg, and Foucault converge to inform a post-structural and constructivist approach to historical thinking in the classroom. This approach challenges hegemonic historical narratives and promotes the idea that historical knowledge is constructed through discourse. The creation of historical narratives in the classroom is not a passive process; rather, it is shaped through writing, discussion, and other forms of engagement such as film analysis. Post-structural metanarratives in history oppose the idea that there is only one definitive version of history. Instead, they emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives and the active role of both educators and students in shaping historical understanding. As Wineburg (2001) suggests, historical thinking involves critical engagement with multiple sources, including texts, films, and the perspectives of others. This process creates an understanding of history, and in fact creates history, that acknowledges the diverse voices and viewpoints that shape it.

The post-structural approach to history also highlights the significance of evidence in constructing historical narratives. While all sources of knowledge are valuable, the process of evaluating evidence is essential to creating a well-rounded historical account. The teacher, in this framework, becomes a facilitator rather than the central authority on historical knowledge. Students are encouraged to actively engage with the material and contribute to the construction of historical understanding.

Post-structural and constructivist approaches to historical thinking emphasize the importance of context, discourse, and multiple perspectives in shaping historical narratives. Drawing on the works of White (1973), Wineburg (2001), and Foucault (1972), this approach highlights the active role of students and educators, both learners in history, in constructing history and challenges the notion of a singular, objective historical narrative. By integrating diverse sources, including film, into the classroom, educators can promote a more inclusive and reflexive understanding of history, encouraging students to critically engage with the narratives that shape their understanding of the past. The basic tenets of this ontological epistemology in the history classroom are as follows:

Post-structural meta-narratives as defined by White (1973)

- Oppose a hegemonic narrative (the idea that history only exists in one form)
- Are created in the history classroom through discourse
- Value knowledge from all sources (Texts, educators, students)
- Utilizes evidence in the practice of creating historical narratives
- Seeks to democratize learning
- Prioritizes a multitude of voices in narrative construction

Cultural Curriculum as defined by Wineburg (2001)

- Values learning from all sources of knowledge
- Is part of a continuous process of evaluating the legitimacy of knowledge
- Builds on and is supplementary to the academic curriculum (does not seek to replace it)
- Consumes knowledge through a critical lens
- Is in a constant state of reflexivity
- Begins with contextualization

Power and Representation in Education outlined by Foucault (1972)

- History as a social construct wherein dominant cultural and institutional power shape the narratives presented by historians.
- The accepted history is determined by power relations and not by a neutral presentation of facts.
- Historical narratives are representations of "civilization" as dominant narratives represent the interests and values of the powerful
- Historical thinking is shaped not just by facts but by the power structures that influence what is considered historical knowledge.
- Discourse shapes historical knowledge,
- Historical understanding is a cultural construct, influenced by the context and perspectives of the individuals in the classroom.
- Distribution of knowledge is a form of power and this power shapes what is taught and accepted as “history” in educational settings.

These tenets will be explored at various stages in the following review of existing literature.

Post-Structuralism and Contextualized Meta-Narratives in History

> [In] every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault, 1970).

Post-structural history breaks from monolithic positivist-centered messaging inherent in traditional historical representation like that described in the above quotation from Foucault. This favors learner-centered engagement by utilizing constructivist narratives, a process that begins negotiation with the grand historical narrative by articulating concerns over hegemonic discourses (Brookshire, 2016, pg. 10). Constructivist educators pay more attention to learned and lived experiences to build a curriculum inclusive of broad sociocultural/historical perspectives explored and, in the case of this study, represented in popular cinematic media. As described by Rogoff et al (2018), "...Learning and development occur in the process of people's participation in the activities and events of their cultural communities" (pg. 7). The activities and events of interest here are participation in consuming history through a discourse on film. Student- and teacher-centered stories involving mainstream cinematic movies provide one mechanism of participation in the creation process for a community-based historical meta-narrative to encourage historical thinking. This is contextualized pedagogy built from the cultural curriculum.

John Dewey laid the groundwork for contextualized research in education asserting that communication is "a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession" (Dewey, 1916, pg. 12). Pragmatist researchers, in line with Dewey's contextualization of learning environments, apply this shared cultural experience of classroom learning at a local and

non-local level (Erickson, 1986). Cultural curriculum in the classroom creates rather than dictates a meta-narrative of history through shared experiences. The ideal is for educators to avoid refracting meaning making in ways applicable only to adult stakeholders and demonstrate value in learner knowledge (Jones et al. 2022). This is where post-structuralists diverge from Dewey, and we see a key distinction between pragmatism and contextual deconstruction.

> Whereas Dewey's critique is aimed at a particular type of metaphysics, viz., essentialist metaphysics, [post-structuralist] critique is not aimed at a particular type of metaphysics but is a questioning of the metaphysical 'gesture' itself—a questioning of the very possibility of metaphysics—and the central notion in this questioning is the idea of the 'metaphysics of presence'. (Derrida, 1978, p. 279).

In simple terms, pragmatists assert that context is important for understanding the learning process. Post-structuralists question whether the learning process exists beyond individual and culture group contexts. Cultural curriculum researchers make use of Derrida's concept of deconstruction to undo assumptions concerning a text, or in the case of history, breaking down a hegemonic narrative for the purpose of putting those assumptions on display (Barker, 2008, p. 87). Meta-analysis in history lies in our desire to awaken voices lost by the presence of a hegemonic history narrative and to make inclusion a priority both in the process of history representation and history creation. The constructivist post-structural elements include critical literacy of historical narratives. Wansink (2016) explains:

> A 'critical pluralist' stance towards history... means the acceptance of narrative diversity in the curriculum and recognizing the inevitable different historical interpretations, but also learning pupils to make value-judgments about the historical narratives they encounter (p. 95).

In other words, the objective is to do justice to those "othered" in the history narrative and thereby make the historical processes possible (Biesta, 2013, pg. 721). The issue of

contextualization moves to the forefront of interpretation and representation. From a post-structuralist perspective, another step is necessary. This step involves moving beyond the recognition of the context of understanding to challenge that context can exist outside the meta-context of power and discourse.

In post-structuralism, truth is contingent upon context and meaning and is constructed by both individuals and groups (Foucault, 1970); therefore, the role of the educator is to ensure that context remains at the forefront of discourse. The individual engages with primary text and absorbs its message through an existing contextual lens. This act creates a new contextualization by integrating knowledge valued by the existing lens. The classroom, as a culture group, reflects the common experience of primary analysis and discourse for the purpose of displaying and deconstructing assumptions in the individual's contextual process. Educators provide an example in deconstruction; however, they also surrender control in meaning making to highlight the diverse voices that contribute to historical understanding in an effort to maintain education as a democratic process (Jones, 2022). In this, a popular film can be a powerful tool in that it both reflects a larger cultural understanding of history represented in art produced for entertainment purposes and it offers opportunity for negotiating between that larger cultural context with the unique classroom culture. This negotiation is inherent in social studies classrooms wherein educators choose to integrate movies into their curriculum. Research has shown this practice is prolific, and nearly ubiquitous.

Film and the Cultural Curriculum

> Social studies teachers could be fairly certain of two things in regard to film use in the classroom: (a) students were engaged with film outside the classroom, and (b) films would be used in the classrooms at some point. The focus on film

> research during the new millennium needs to focus on how to use student interest in film to increase student achievement, interest and understanding. The only way this will be possible is by using film to encourage critical thinking. (Russell, 2017, pg. 6).

There is extensive research available concerning common educator practices, teacher training and observations, and other models for the utilization of film that educators are likely to mimic (Monte-Sano, 2008). This is not always done effectively. It is common to hear stories of teachers who put a film in just to kill some time. They chose to show a film because it keeps students focused when there is a substitute, or just because it is Friday (Elfer, 2017). Social studies teachers may employ cinema as a break from lesson plans rather than an active supplement (Russell, 2010 and 2012); however, there is substantial evidence that films, when employed in good faith and with intention planning, can be some of the most impactful, memorable, and effective sources for supporting the academic and cultural curriculum. When considering strategies for the use of film in social studies classrooms, there are two sources that provide a baseline, Stoddard et al *Teaching History with Film: Strategies for Secondary Social Studies* (2018) and Russell et al *Cinematic Social Studies: A Resource for Teaching and Learning Social Studies with Film* (2017). These sources start from the premise that social studies teachers are using film regularly. They then move into strategies for effective use of feature films. Russell (2017) asserts that the most common practice for teachers is to use film as a text. Teachers show a film or a clip from a film to replace other texts, such as a lecture, written and image based primary documents, or a textbook. This is the least impactful way film can be utilized, yet teachers with good intentions will show a film that depicts a historical event or other social studies content and once that film has finished, they will often say, "See? Everybody catch

that. OK, let's move on" (Elfer, 2017). In these situations, film is not supporting a lesson; rather, it is replacing a lesson, because of the lack of engagement with the film as a legitimate source. One of the main factors is that mainstream popular films are not intended as educational sources; rather, they are works of art in which the priority is entertainment (Weeks, 2022). Moreover, when dealing with popular mainstream movies, there is danger in historical exaggeration, stereotyping, caricaturing, and narrative shortcuts that are often inherent in art created for entertainment rather than education. As a warning for the use of movies in the classroom for education, Joanou (2017) explains:

> Media products are often politically and ideologically bound, and frequently reinforce the hegemony of the dominant culture. In other words, the media, popular culture, and the entertainment industry convey often detrimental and deleterious messages about minority groups in the United States, and these messages play a role in maintaining systems of domination and subordination (p. 41).

A movie by itself typically does not translate into a lesson plan, particularly if the goal is to be inclusive of all learner experiences and learning goals; therefore, it is necessary to strategize for increasing the effectiveness of using film in the classroom by engaging with cinema as a primary source. It is well recognized that classic and vintage films are primary documents (Knickerbocker, 2014); however, employing modern films as part of primary analysis is also an effective strategy for building critical literacy and cultural reflexivity. In this it is the task of learners to consume films with a critical lens that seeks to “uncover embedded ideologies of culture and interrogate how space and place are overtly represented through the viewpoint of a director, producer, and/or writer(s)” (Kenna, 2023).

Films can be an aid to develop interpretive skills, demonstrate historiography, provide multiple perspectives on a particular historical topic, depict historical atmosphere, or create empathy for a historical period and characters (Marcus, 2010). Movies can also be utilized as a springboard for class discussions in that the utilization of historical films can be both a source of information and a way for young people to experience social norms and gain insight into their own culture (Waters, 2020). Regardless of how a film is used as a tool for instruction, there needs to be intentionality and a clear purpose. Just like any lesson planning in a social studies classroom, there should be explicit methods by which film will facilitate engagement and stimulate academic discourse (Russell, 2017).

History and the Weight of Film

> History...ought to do two things [for our students]. It ought to tell them about the past, informing them not only about events but also about thoughts, images, textures, styles. And it will (or ought to) introduce them to a particular way of thinking. That way of thinking requires an awareness of the gaps, ambiguities, and prejudices present in any set of historical sources. It further requires recognition of the complexities inherent in any human situation. Successful students will learn to acknowledge the complexities, do justice to them, and yet find pattern and order within them (Herlihy, 1988, pg. 1186).

The above quotation by historian David Herlihy highlights key aspects of the historical thinking process that inform my own understanding. This includes “awareness of the gaps, ambiguities, and prejudices” as well as emphasizing the “recognition” and “acknowledgment” of complexity in sources. Herlihy in this statement, it should be noted, was explicitly condemning the use of popular cinema as a secondary source for teaching history. On the other end of the

debate, Natalie Zemon Davis and Hayden White place film within the wider range of meaning-making inherent to the historian's craft. White states that “no history, visual or verbal, ‘mirrors’ all or even the greater part of the events or scenes of which it purports to be an account” (White, 1988, pg. 1194). Like written history, film relies on symbols, condenses stories, and qualifies actions through interpretation. Therefore, White argues, when comparing film to written historical accounts, “it is only the medium that differs, not the way in which messages are produced” (White, 1988, pg. 1194). Davis, the author of the book *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1982) which was made into a film, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982), asserts that when rightly understood, filmmaking is effective as a mechanism for talking about the past when it lives up to the goals of professional history. Engaging with film as a historical text must do more than chronicle a narrative. The goal is to explain why and how the narrative is shaped by differences in understanding and interpretation. Davis states, "There is an inevitable dialogue between the past and the present” and it is the job of the historian to contextualize this dialogue (Davis, 1988, pg. 271).

For APEURO learners to *think like historians* their methods and processes of engaging with film must be consistent with the practice of history. This includes understanding and interpreting representations of history as much as knowledge building of historical content. In this, film serves as both a secondary and primary source as it is a visual and aural engagement with historical representation and susceptible to critical analysis of the decisions that led to this form of representation. As with any historical source material, film has a place in the discourse of meaning making of a learner-centered classroom. Showing and discussing a mainstream movie is contextualized learning that values the cultural curriculum of a shared experience. When utilizing film, history learners should recognize that often the screenwriter’s and director’s

lack of scholarly inquiry into historical individuals and institutions, and those touched by them, will leave tell-tale signs of entertainment and accessibility outweighing rigor and nuance (Stevenson, 2014). And yet, movies are a means of what Wineburg describes as part of a learner's "historical sense making" (2007, pg. 169). To ignore this places the academic state-mandated curriculum in opposition to the cultural curriculum experienced by classroom learners. Wineburg (2007) explains in his research on high school student in the 1990s conceptualizing their parents' experiences in the 1960s:

> Some educators may bristle at the thought that popular film has become a tool for learning about the Sixties and may demand that videos be removed from the classroom. Doing so, however, would merely leave the films rentable through Blockbuster or Netflix, streamed over the Internet, and available 24/7 through pay-per view cable and satellite purveyors. Even historians - such as the president of the Organization of American Historians - begrudgingly recognize film as the predominant influence on students' historical understanding. Rather than pretending that we can do away with popular culture, we might try instead to understand how its forces can be harnessed - rather than spurned or simply ignored - to advance students' historical understanding (p. 175).

Cultural Curriculum and Learning History

There continues to be a gap between the valuation of the academic and cultural curriculum for the creation of historical narratives (Wineburg, 2007). Marcyzk (2022) explains that "skeptics of disciplinary history education may find it overly optimistic to hope that devoting greater classroom time and resources to the work of historians will be useful for students who are unlikely to pursue history professionally" (p. 535); however, historical thinking and developing an understanding of lived experiences must be, particularly in the classroom, mutually reinforcing. Moreover, viewing historical thinking as purely an academic exercise minimizes the impact of authentic historical inquiry (Seixas, 2004). By embracing cultural curriculum of learner experiences, such as consuming history through film, is less about mimicking historians; rather the goal becomes to embrace a broader variety of thinking as part of

authentic and valuable history learning (Seixas, 2004; Cuban, 2016) to "disrupt the norms in social studies instruction, which remain persistently teacher-driven, monologic, and focused on content rather than epistemic cognition" (Marcyzk, 2022, p. 535).

Wineburg addressed the cultural curriculum of family experience and conversation. Wineburg interviewed high school students set to graduate between 1997 and 1999 and their understanding of historical events that occurred during their parents' generation, specifically the Vietnam War. This generation of secondary students historicizes the broad narrative of the Vietnam Era through a cultural understanding that originated at home and was ingrained as a deeper understanding than traditional classroom history lessons. Most notably, students from a range of academic abilities and engagement in the classroom articulated that the Vietnam War "had no purpose" or was "a pointless war" (Wineburg, p. 41). In contrast, these students had almost no grasp or ability to discuss aspects of historical events outside the range of their family conversations, such as the Punic Wars, learned solely in the classroom setting. The broader implications are described in terms of personalizing the experience of historicization and its place in the classroom. Wineburg states:

> ... Forces ... act to historicize today's youth and suggest how educators might marshal these forces—rather than spurning or simply ignoring them—to advance young people's historical understanding... Together, the history young people glean from this "cultural curriculum" may be far more powerful in shaping their ideas about the past than the mountains of textbooks that continue to occupy historians' and history educators' attention. (p. 69)

Wineburg's research question "To what extent does family memory influence student understanding, aka contextualizing, historical events" has a distinct tinge of post-structuralism in the valuation of cultural knowledge, while also calling for distinct pragmatic application in the classroom (p. 43). Wineburg's work, existing on the border between post-structuralism and pragmatism, reflects the common origins of both theories. The process of creating a cultural

curriculum focuses on individualizing contextualization by valuing knowledge that leads to understanding over performative academic achievement by asking the questions:

1. How do people construct an understanding of historical events from a group of fragmented and contradictory documents?
2. What heuristics or rules of thumb help individuals fill in the gaps left by such documents?
3. What beliefs do people hold about history that help or hinder their ability to make sense of historical evidence? (Wineburg, 1991, p. 74)

In the case of Wineburg's research, the cultural curriculum is inter-generational discourse similar to the use of film for providing opportunities to create a commonality of language and experience (Wineburg, 2007). As with Wineburg's participants who had come to a common understanding of the Vietnam War via interactions with the adults in their lives, utilizing film as a form of document analysis creates a commonality of language and discourse that both represents history while simultaneously creating it. It is the task of educators to open a critical discussion of contextualization and then release control to student voices as a critical reflexive practice. High school students in the late 1990s had parents and extended family members who had either served in the armed forces, attended anti-war protests, listened to John Lennon's music, or watched Muhammad Ali on television denouncing the War. As significant is that these students had grown up in a time when cultural reactions to the Vietnam War continued to emerge in popular cinema. Their parents, as adults, were likely consumers of the anti-Vietnam War messaging in films such as *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Platoon* (1986), and *Hamburger Hill* (1987). This cultural message continued in the 1990s through depictions of a pointless war with the critically and financially successful film *Forest Gump* (1993, see Wineburg, 1997). Even science

fiction films such as James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986), John McTiernan's *Predator* (1987), and Roland Emmerich's *Universal Soldier* (1992) drew heavily on the themes of fighting a pointless war in their worldbuilding narratives modeled on the Vietnam War (Week, 2022). The legacy of this 1990s cultural curriculum continues to inform perceptions of the Vietnam War much in the way film had the reverse messaging for World War II as the good war portrayed in films such as *Schindler's List* (1993), *Saving Private Ryan* (1997), and *Band of Brothers* (2001) (Wineburg, 2007, Weeks, 2022). This cultural curriculum learned through film continues to influence modern classrooms as the 1990s generation makes way for a new generation of educators who continue to utilize film in their classrooms.

Film and Classroom Strategies: Blending Cultural and Academic History

> Some middle school and high school history teachers enthusiastically incorporate film into their classrooms, but others may hesitate for a variety of reasons: the time commitment; the fictionalized components of feature films; the cost; the suitability for an adolescent audience; or perhaps, a lack of professional preparation in teaching with film. In spite of those potential obstacles, however, film is such a significant source of historical knowledge for many adolescents that history teachers should seriously consider including film in their classrooms (Knickerbocker, 2014, p. 69).

Cinematic movies are a form of historical storytelling through *emplotment* (White, 1973). Storytelling within the practice of teaching "is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience" (McEwan, 1995 p. 2). Therefore, storytelling can be perceived as tangible when individual awareness advances storytelling into the educational content of the curriculum (Abrahamson, 1998). Returning to the classroom, consider films that could be used to supplement the APEURO curriculum. As individuals, learners might watch the same movie and come to vastly different conclusions; however, when film is digested in a communal setting, interpretation becomes a communal experience through discussion, dialogue, and debate over shared evaluations (Russell, 2017).

Consider the films that could be used in an Advanced Placement United States, European, or World History classroom: *1917* (2019) and *All Quiet on the Western Front (2022)* (European History Standard 8.2, United States History Standard 7.5 and 7.13, and World History Standard 7.7. See Course Descriptions and Guidelines available at APCentral https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses).

What kind of source are these films? Are they primary sources or secondary sources? Students should recognize that these are secondary sources about the events they are depicting. Showing these films as texts is to engage with secondary source analysis. Continue questioning students: How do we turn these films into primary sources?

Ideally, students would recognize that *1917* (2019) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) cannot be primary sources about the First World War. To make these films into primary sources, educators engage instead with the production and reception of these films. *1917* (2019) could be a primary source about the film career of actor Benedict Cumberbatch or *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) about anti-war messaging of films in the wake of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan or the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see Stevenson, 2022). This is layering complexity into discussions of media awareness while reinforcing academic course content.

Distinguishing the film from the historical events depicted highlights a key element in understanding that all these films are historical fiction, even films that may be based on real events. This practice of *emplotment* championed by Hayden White (1988), the use of a creative license in historical storytelling to make a lesson memorable and accessible, is used for engagement and narrative building; however, that is not the final goal. Teachers and students cannot fall into the trap of taking these films at face value; rather, the entertainment factor of

films is a starting point for engaging historical events. The objective is to contextualize those events along with the film's representation. An example would be to connect film discussions to historiography wherein academic discourse and popular media representations of historical topics such as the First World War blend as part of a national cultural curriculum. This is a powerful historical skill worth exploring in the classroom.

Educators using historical-science fiction films intentionally diverge from fact-based narratives. The strategies are similar; however, it is the context that shifts. A teacher is still acknowledging the period in which the film is being viewed in discussion with the era in which the film is being produced. The difference is that the film is not trying to be historically or factually representative, so interpreting the era it depicts becomes more complex. Consider the film *Wonder Woman* (2017) as a primary source of fantasy portrayals based on a historical era. The film's complexity becomes layered because it cannot be a true story; however, because it is set in a historical era it is a depicter of the atmosphere according to a 2017 understanding and consumed by a 2024 classroom audience (Russell, 2017). What is more significant is explaining why the creators of a superhero fantasy film like *Wonder Woman* (2017) chose the First World War as the setting for an otherwise make-believe world. To address this, it is necessary to take a broad overview of the historical relationship between film and World War I as it relates to popular historiographical traditions.

In my experience as an AP European History teacher, I made a point to utilize films in a way that connected to the College Board course guide. For example, one of the first films I used early in the school year was *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982), a French film starring Gerard Depardieu. The film, as text, depicts 16th-century peasant life based on a historical court case researched by Davis and published in a book by the same name (Davis, 1981). The College Board

course guide identifies key terms for the historical period (1450-1648) in which the story of the film takes place (16th century France) – Renaissance, Reformation, Early Colonization, and the Scientific Revolution. Structural coding for this film involves identifying specific scenes, props, dialogue, or other such references that fit with these College Board buzzwords. Success with lesson planning around *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) would be determined by students identifying and then using these buzzwords in their post-film discussion or in written essays. Inductive coding moves beyond the College Board curriculum to determine how AP teachers might engage with this film in other ways. This could include things such as emotional connection, feeling of mystery and intrigue, and the importance of engaging narratives. In this case, success is measured in engagement with the film, emotional reactions to events, and questions that emerge. Combining the structural and inductive coding of this film supports learner-centered curriculum in historical thinking. The ideal is for classroom discourse around film to encourage democratized learning that values student and teacher, both learners, input in a manner that supports both academic and cultural curricula.

Academic research and my own experience using film in the social studies classroom set the groundwork for this study and provided specific strategies to look out for when interviewing participants; however, in keeping with post-structural constructivist ontology, I am not looking to assess or judge participants in their classroom practices and choices surrounding film. There is no correct answer participants can give when addressing interview questions. During this study, I found participants often describe various pedagogical strategies outlined by Russell (2017), Stoddard (2010), or Marcus (2018), and yet those participants are unfamiliar with the literature and research behind their practices. Likewise, there were participants that did not employ what the literature would describe as best practices when using film, but these participants experienced

success in using film both in addressing academic curriculum and facilitating classroom cultural experiences. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the constructed culture of APEURO classrooms and better understand the role film plays in the construction of metanarrative histories as unique as each participant and their experiences. It is also to determine the impact of various factors that might influence participants decision to utilize popular media for the construction of a historical narrative. For this, it is important to evaluate the structure of APEURO curriculum as dictated by the College Board and its role in shaping pedagogical strategies.

The College Board

The traditional College Board APEURO curriculum is not democratic, nor has it traditionally encouraged democratic engagement with classroom stakeholders. The College Board and ETS are regulatory bodies that standardize classroom culture with long regulations, course guides, and high-stakes exams that evaluate both students and teachers. In this way, College Board is the embodiment of what Foucault identifies as the dominant cultural and institutional power shaping historical narratives. In this section, I will examine the structural issues with APEURO and why attempts by the College Board to offer token reforms have failed to substantively change how learners engage with history.

The College Board maintains a transactional relationship with APEURO teachers, readers, and students wherein education becomes a series of business exchanges. As with any business exchange, the benefits offered by a corporation come with embedded costs for employees and customers. This is the dual nature of the College Board's relationship with both teachers and students. The College Board and ETS pay APEURO readers to participate in the

Read while charging teachers to attend Summer Institute (APSI) training programs.[12] AP teachers at public schools may be paid for each student who passes the APEURO exam creating a monetary incentive for teaching to the test that can hinder creative learning exploration. APEURO can be a money saver for students who pass the exam as they earn college credit at state institutions.[13] APEURO exposes students to rigorous content and skills-based training that is often absent from honors or general high school history courses, and yet the APEURO exam system epitomizes the centralization of education and knowledge assessment that disrupts the learner-centered classroom model. For this opportunity, students pay $96 to take the APEURO EOC.[14] Cost, as well as the selective nature of APEURO have historically contributed to academic segregation within schools.

Teachers, Readers, and Students in APEURO

The role of secondary social studies practitioners is often to serve as disseminators and assessors of knowledge dictated by a standardized curriculum. In the case of APEURO, its rigorous structure leaves little room for spontaneous discussion or exploration of topics and sources not directly tied to the End-of-Course Exam (EOC). As a result, teachers often adopt a pragmatic approach, adjusting instructional methods to best align with their local classroom contexts while ensuring student success on the EOC (Burkholt, 2022).

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[12] Typical tuition fees for APSI range between $650 and $950 depending on whether the training occurs in person or is virtual. This does not include travel costs. See https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/professional-learning/workshops/fees-deadlines.

[13] At the time of this writing, AP teachers in Florida public schools received $50 per student that passed the EOC; As an example, the University of Florida charges $212 per undergraduate credit hour. This is the tuition fee listed on the University of Florida website for residents during the 2023-2024 academic year. Non-residents are charged $707 per credit hour for undergraduate courses. See, https://www.fa.ufl.edu/directives/2022-23-academic-year-tuition-and-fees/

[14] This cost is covered by the student or, depending on local conditions, may be paid by the school, district, or the state. At the time I was teaching APEURO, the Florida Department of Education paid for students AP exams statewide.

This stands in contrast to college history professors, who typically have the freedom to design their curriculum based on their own interpretations and analyses of history. Unlike AP teachers, they can adopt a constructivist or interpretivist model, incorporating diverse sources such as film to shape instruction (Mandell, 2008). In an AP classroom, however, justifying the use of popular media sources like movies can be more challenging due to the exam-driven structure of the course.

Despite these distinctions, the roles of AP teachers and college professors are not mutually exclusive. Individual history educators often blend elements of both pragmatic and constructivist approaches. APEURO teachers in this study are high school educators marketed by the College Board as instructors of a college-equivalent curriculum (see, apcentral.collegeboard.org). Given the standardized nature of the AP framework, this claim may seem paradoxical. However, there is an ongoing negotiation between the APEURO teacher as a pragmatist, adhering to the AP Course and Exam Guide, and the constructivist, skills-based instructor engaged in broader historical inquiry. In this way, APEURO teachers occupy a unique, hybrid space between secondary practitioners and college history professors, ultimately shaping a distinct classroom culture.

APEURO teachers are individuals with a range of intellectual and academic skills for historical thinking and learning. Becoming an AP teacher for any course is not as clear and straightforward as similar programs like the International Baccalaureate (IB. see, www.ibo.org) or AICE Cambridge (www.cambridgeinternational.org). The process of becoming an AP teacher varies with each school, district, and state; however, the tendency and preference is for AP teachers to be more experienced with the subject area than practitioners of honors or general history courses (see the College Board run website https://collegereadiness.uworld.com/). The

College Board requires all AP courses and teachers to register with the College Board through their school's AP coordinator and to be approved by the AP Audit (apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/teachers). Typically, AP teachers participate in the Summer Institute training program to learn about their subject and the EOC; however, this is a recommendation rather than a requirement. While the training is optional according to the College Board, all AP teachers must submit course syllabi and have them approved according to the AP Audit. AP teachers, APEURO included, can create their own syllabi if they follow strict College Board guidelines. They may also opt to download and submit a standard syllabus from the College Board website to use as their own. In requiring the course audit and offering an established syllabus, the College Board maintains standardization in the curriculum (apcentral.collegeboard.org).

To become an APEURO reader, teachers must have taught their APEURO course for three years or have taught at the college-level. Other courses, such as APWORLD and APHUMAN, are consistently short of readers and will openly advertise and encourage teachers to apply. APEURO has experienced a consistent decline in enrollment so there are fewer opportunities for new readers. Becoming an AP reader is like being in a club in that once you are in, you are in. Situations arise where readers are not invited back such as absenteeism, inability to maintain standards, or violating ETS non-disclosure policies; however, this is unusual. Experienced readers have a chance to be promoted to the Leadership through recommendations. TLs fill out end-of-day reports that assess and comment on a reader's production. Likewise, QLs evaluate TLs, ELs evaluate QLs, and so forth up to CR. TLs can flag readers for potential leadership positions on these end-of-day reports. The recommendation does not equate to promotion; however, ETS states that a reader cannot be promoted without this recommendation.

The ultimate decision for promotion, or deciding whether a reader should not return, is determined by the CR and the ETS representatives. The result is a system of semi-patronage that at times seems arbitrary as the various behind-the-scenes features are not transparent.[15]

For APEURO, readers and the Leadership who are high school teachers are, by definition, required to teach the APEURO course. By the nature of this course, geographically limited in its scope of examination, most teachers and therefore participants in the Read are White. To date there has been no publicly available research on the demographics of the APEURO teachers or readers; however, from experience, I can say that persons of color are very rare at the APEURO Read.[16] This makes the limiting nature of the APEURO course, curriculum, and scoring process as well as the social dynamics of this insular group a form of DeFacto segregation based on race. This type of system-based racial and ethnic gatekeeping, intentional or unintentional, is reflected in the College Board APEURO curriculum and translates to the students who enroll in this course.

AP courses are advertised as an opportunity for students to become college-ready. According to the College Board website, AP courses help students

- Build skills and confidence
- Stand out to colleges
- Succeed in college
- Save time and money in college (see, apcentral.collegeboard.org)

[15] Information pertaining to the promotion process at the Read is not publicly available. The apcentral website only has information about becoming a reader and says nothing about becoming part of the Leadership.

[16] In my 18 years at the Read I have only known three people of color as readers or in Leadership, of which two are college history professors and thus outside the scope of this study. For the 2024-2025 school year, College Board, for the first time, appointed a Black professor to be on the European History exam development committee.

In my experience as a college history professor, students who had taken AP courses prior to enrolling in my class performed better on essays and were more apt to contribute to classroom discussions. This could be linked to student experiences in AP courses or perhaps these students were designated to take AP courses because they had already developed the academic skills valued in a college course. Likely it is a little of both. The difficulty in determining which factor is more relevant stems from the lack of transparency in identifying and recommending students to take AP courses. Metrics used to enroll students in AP courses are even less clear than the process of selecting AP teachers, readers, and the Leadership. I experienced this as a secondary teacher at a title 1 school. This school was on the border between a mostly White affluent neighborhood on one side and a lower socioeconomic neighborhood on the other. The school was academically segregated in that there was an AP wing separated from the rest of the student body. White students from the affluent neighborhood were overrepresented in AP courses in general and in the extreme in my APEURO classroom. This type of intra-school academic segregation is described by Posey-Maddox (2014): "Middle-class engagement [in urban schools], when unfettered, is likely to create new patterns of educational inequality and exclusion in districts and schools" (p. 2). This is backed by critical scholarship that interrogates majoritarian frames like the selective admissions policies of AP, IB, and honors programs that are in the same vein as selective admissions into colleges and universities (Ledesma, 2015). This type of academic segregation occurs through academic *tracks* that assign students to various levels of rigorous coursework based on previous academic performance. Walseman (2010) explains that the academic track system, in which AP courses play an important role, is a major

factor in developing what researchers designate "second-generation segregation" (p. 1687).[17]

Research shows that the expansion of AP (along with IB, AICE, and Dual Enrollment) programs is not equal for all student groups. *Tracking* occurs when students are put into ability groups or *tracks* such as the standard diploma track, honors track, or AP track. Studies found that this practice leads to segregated classes (Clotfelter et al., 2003; Kelly, 2009; Oakes, 1995) and has promoted achievement gaps (Gamoran, 1992) and participation gaps in rigorous classes, including AP, by race and ethnicity (Conger et al., 2009; Gandara, 1995; Klopfenstein, 2003; Kalogrides, 2013; Solorzano, 2004; Zarate, 2006). Additional studies found participation gaps by income (Margolis, 2017; Theokas, 2013). Gaps such as these are the result of multiple factors including "a mix of efforts to match talent with opportunities, cultural assumptions about the effects of race and class on social success, structural characteristics of high schools, and political maneuvering by efficacious students and their parents" (Oakes, 1995, p. 29). It has been found that "AP courses continue to be an inequitable sorting mechanism that limits some groups' college preparation opportunities" (Zarete, 2006, p. 1).

In much the same way that AP courses form a system of tracking that is rife with socioeconomic barriers, the APEURO curriculum is designed to regulate, dictate, and control learning through a series of gate-keeping practices. A look back at the history of AP shows systematic issues that are difficult to address with incremental reform (Tate, 1997). The introduction of the Advanced Placement curriculum was a reaction to the 1950s democratization

[17] Walseman's study was a comprehensive quantitative analysis of socio-economic and race-based segregation occurring as a result of academic tracking in English courses including AP, IB, honors, general, and remedial. I was unable to locate similar research into social studies/social science courses. I believe the data here is comparable. More research needs to be done; however, I can say that my own experience with AP supports Walseman's conclusions, particularly in an elective course like APEURO.

of education (Rothschild, 1999). At the time, politicians and education administrators asserted that increased access lowered performance standards and limited capable, gifted students' ability to advance beyond their age group, and advanced students were held back as the gap between secondary and college education increased (Cal, 2020 and Smith, 2021). The idea was for AP to bridge the gap with college-level curriculum for students who were on a clear college trajectory. A critical analysis of this move to introduce a separate curriculum for advanced students suggests this intent also mirrored movements to segregate classrooms in a way that had once been the norm for schools prior to *Brown v Board* circa 1954 (McBride, 2015). It is difficult to assign intent to designers of the College Board's AP curriculum from the outset, yet the timing seems indicative. Advanced Placement was not racially segregated via Jim Crow-style legal processes; however, DeFacto segregation became the norm given the identification process for gifted students who would go on to advanced placement programs (Thompson, 2003).

In classes such as APUSH and APEURO, hegemonic historical narratives continued to dominate the advanced classrooms that were virtually isolated from racial minorities, and therefore a diversity of voices, based on prescribed academic tracks (White, 1973, Walseman, 2010, Wilson, 2014). Much of this stemmed from the fact that these advanced history courses were still heavily based on content dispensed in a hierarchical fashion rather than attempting to democratize knowledge and meet learners where they are by developing critical thinking skills. These are pragmatist aspects endemic to courses such as APEURO. The disconnect between content delivery and critical engagement underscores a larger issue within AP history courses. While these classes claim to reflect the rigor of higher education, their reliance on hierarchical knowledge transmission often falls short of fostering the analytical skills that are more common in college-level history programs.

The DBQ

The AP history curriculum is marketed by the College Board as aligning with college-level content, and yet AP history courses consistently fail to keep up with college-level practices of historical thinking. Nikki Mandell defines historical thinking as follows:

> We defined historical literacy as an understanding of what history "is" and what historians "do." As a result, we concluded that historical literacy requires a degree of fluency in the disciplinary language of history and, more broadly, requires fluency in historical "ways of knowing" ... teaching and learning historical literacy requires the same three steps:
> 1. Asking questions about the past: History begins with questions about something we want to know or that we are curious about?
> 2. Gathering sources and evaluating the evidence in those sources: Use primary and secondary sources that may include, but are not limited to, textbooks.
> 3. Drawing conclusions, supported by the evidence, that answer the questions: All historical interpretations are not equal. Some are better than others. Some are wrong or misleading (2008, p. 55 and 56).

The content-based approach of early AP history classrooms has been heavily criticized by the history academy which had begun a dramatic shift in the 1970s (Rothschild, 2000). By the 1970s social history practices had not infiltrated high school level courses despite a shift in college-level history away from more traditional positivist political and military narratives. To address this gap, the College Board introduced the Document Based Question (DBQ) into AP history courses. The goal was to move away from knowledge-based learning and focus more on critical history by developing interpretive skills. A significant motivation was the rising popularity of social history, a subfield in the academy that stressed building historical narratives from the bottom up over rote memorization. In 1973, the APUSH exam piloted the DBQ providing an inroad to new opportunities of critical analysis through direct engagement with primary sources (Rothschild, 2000). Still, this transition floundered. Rothschild (2000) explains that in the first decade of the DBQ "teachers did what they always do, try to predict the question and prep students for it" (p. 497). This was exposed in 1988 when the APUSH DBQ addressed

the decision to drop the atomic bomb. This had the double effect of demanding critical analysis of opposing narratives and exposing the fact that many teachers had not reached that point in the curriculum by exam time. The hope was to strike home to teachers that focusing exclusively on content was not going to work anymore (Rothschild, 2000). Students were going to have to be instructed on the strategies and interpretive skills necessary to *think like a historian*. Students would have to learn how to work with primary documents for topics they may not have previously encountered. To think like a historian, researchers began to ask the question, what do historians see in primary documents that secondary educators, and by extension their students, do not?

Wineburg explored the process of historical *ways of knowing* by comparing AP history students and professional historians. In this research study, the participants, 8 historians, and 8 high school seniors were presented with documents, both written and pictorial, much like the AP history exams. Each was asked to rank them by trustworthiness and asked a series of clarifying questions focusing on what they did, thought, knew, and believed that allowed them to see patterns. Not surprisingly, the historians were much more detailed in their explanation and grouping of the documents, whereas the high school seniors saw only a collection of details upon which they struggled to elaborate. Wineburg (1991) summarizes each group's reading strategies to elaborate distinctions in the interpretive processes.

> ...from the first word in the upper-lefthand corner to the last word in the bottom-righthand corner, students seemed to view texts as vehicles for conveying information in which the attribution was just the last thing to be read, one more bit of information to be added to the other bits that had been gathered. But for historians, who used the attribution to erect elaborate scenarios about authors and the circumstances of document generation, the attribution was not another bit of information, but the "bit" from which all else emanated. Historians seemed to view texts not as vehicles but as people, not as bits of information to be gathered but as social exchanges to be understood. Viewed in this light, the sourcing heuristic is not really a rule of thumb or problem-solving strategy as much as it is

> the manifestation of a belief system in which texts are defined by their authors. (pg. 79)

Wineburg concluded that high school history courses, even those that purported to be college equivalent, are tragically flawed in their academic content transmission. The hierarchical format continues to encourage students to look for a correct historical narrative rather than create a narrative based on a combination of their understanding and the evidence presented on a DBQ. The cultural curriculum and historical understanding remain subservient rather than supportive of the academic curriculum and listing facts. One issue is that despite the introduction of the DBQ as a mechanism to force analytical thinking, teachers are not always on board (Fitzpatrick 2019). High-stakes testing continues to encourage instruction that favors knowledge building over critical reading and argumentative writing skills. Contextualized understanding is diluted in response to policies that demand attention to high-stakes testing such as the AP exam. Research shows that instructors continue to feel hampered in their instructional and content decisions and contextualization activities are described as "'jazz-hands' in a fact-based world" (Fitzpatrick 2019, p. 212).

This research demonstrates a failure to address the systematic issues with the AP history exams and curriculum that discourage learners from engaging in historical thinking. Success on the DBQ requires a level of contextualized deconstruction of meta-histories through primary source analysis as a necessary step towards dismantling reductionist thinking; however, College Board does this by providing point and counterpoint documents as a nod toward revisionist history, a philosophically and academically problematic concept (White, 1973). For example, the 2022 APUSH DBQ asked the question "Evaluate the extent to which the United States developed a national identity between 1800 and 1855" (apcental.collegeboard.org). The documents chosen included three official government documents, three documents from

marginalized political groups (sources included one Native American, one African American, and one proto-feminist document), and one chart. Students could reasonably argue, and in fact were required to engage to some extent, with narrative and counter-narrative based on the value and weight given to each source. This has been limited over the past 20 years of DBQs from APUSH and APEURO to favor majoritarian voices (see, Collegeboard APEURO and APUSH websites for past exams). It is also tokenizing in that by introducing documents that offer a *revisionist* perspective it maintains the idea that there is history and then there is an *alternative* history. Both narratives are chosen, disseminated, and assessed by the College Board. In this way, the College Board maintains its status as the gatekeeper perpetuating a hegemonic narrative while appearing to offer more representation.

It is against these forces that the constructivist learner-educator is pitted. There is a cognitive dissonance between the messaging inherent in the College Board's history exams and the expressed desire to develop critical historical literacy for classroom learners. A valuation of knowledge determined by pragmatic-structuralist entities such as the College Board, APEURO practitioners, and AP-tracked students is always going to be lacking in representation and understanding for historical processes. The most significant gap is in creating a classroom culture that ranks students according to their ability to fall in line with the status quo rather than on their interpretive skills, analysis, or cultural awareness. This is where the post-structural constructivist educator finds inroads to encourage learning over performance. In this, film is an important tool in maintaining learner engagement, diversifying literacy practices, interpreting multiple layers of contextualization, and making history both enjoyable and memorable. Educators can utilize popular cinema as a mechanism for emphasizing instructional methods over content, research over memorization, knowledge appreciation over knowledge panic, and education over the

monopolization of educational knowledge through gatekeeping. This is in part accomplished by putting value on the cultural curriculum in the classroom and embracing a constructivist model that challenges and disrupts hierarchy in learning. For this, popular movies can play a vital role. The question remains, how do APEURO learner-educators chose to navigate this?

Understanding the role of film in disrupting traditional hierarchies of knowledge raises important questions about its reception and application in the APEURO classroom. There are research-based and theoretical benefits of using popular cinema to enhance historical literacy and foster both academic and cultural curriculum; however, do educators actually engage with this tool in practice? To explore this, the following chapter delves into the qualitative methods used to examine teacher perspectives, shedding light on the motivations, challenges, and pedagogical choices that shape their use, or lack of use, of film in instruction.

Chapter 3: Methods

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is an approach utilized for assessing the meaning-making process of individuals or groups for everyday decisions, experiences, and choices (Creswell, 2011 and Polkinghorne, 2005).[18] A qualitative approach is best suited for this study to explore individual stories of teachers concerning their perception, attitude, interpretation, and experiences with the use of film in their classrooms. Rather than examine practical applications of film for use in classroom strategies, I am interested in the why and how APEURO readers choose to, or choose not to, use film for instruction and teacher reflections on those decisions. In qualitative research, the researcher acknowledges that human experience and the human perspective exist within a framework of what is knowable and what is interpretable within a conscious analytical framework (Creswell, 2011). This is illustrated through participant experiences and interpreted through existing assumptions and biases.

Whereas quantitative research focuses on measurable statistical data and analyses, qualitative research focuses on understanding the underlying reasons and motivations through interpretive analysis (Bricki and Green, 2007). Qualitative methods explore a phenomenon in the way that one experiences it. This process is rarely linear, often complex and multifaceted, reflecting the nature of human experience, interpretation, feeling, and memory. This recognition is particularly true when researching anecdotal evidence and personal oral histories that span

[18] There is discussion in scholarly circles about the foundational premises of John Creswell's work and its rigid structuralism for qualitative methods. See, Bhattacharya, K. (2016). The Vulnerable Academic: Personal Narratives and Strategic De/Colonizing of Academic Structures. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *22*(5), 309–321. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800415615619. These are criticisms that are worth exploring; however, that discussion point is beyond the scope of this study.

over a career, such as occurred during this study. Qualitative research focuses on developing an understanding of a person's situation recognizing that experience is shaped and reshaped over time and with reflection (Fischer, 2006).

Storytelling as a Method of Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the study of stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and these APEURO readers have stories to tell. Narrative inquiry collects these stories for the purpose of understanding and interpreting culture and knowledge as understood by individuals and groups living those experiences (Riessman, 2008; Clandinin et al., 2013). The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to ask questions that help reveal the meaning-making process within the secondary classroom as demonstrated and explored through film (Wang & Geale, 2015). The three main components of narrative inquiry are temporality, defined as the "past, present and future of people, places, things and events under study" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 3), sociality, "the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480), and place, "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). This is a dynamic way to explore the experiences of participants not just as teachers, professionals, and gatekeepers of knowledge, but as people with wide ranging experiences with cinematic media both inside and outside their classroom. I am interested in how these classroom practitioners view film as teachers, as learners, as history professionals, and for their own enjoyment. In this sense, there is no correct or ideal way film is consumed as each experience is individualized and personal.

Narrative inquiry as a research method is a reaction to positivist and post-positivist objective truth within the social sciences and a building block to constructivism. It is important

to include structural analysis of everyday practices for pragmatic instruction geared toward the high-stakes AP Exam; however, this is only a starting point for the richness that is the knowledge, understanding, and interpretation created by these education professionals. As a qualitative narrative researcher, I sought to space in this study for sharing stories of classroom culture and make collective experiences accessible within a contextualized framework (Clandinin, 2006; Lieblich et al., 1998). Human experience is individual, social, and shaped by narratives constructed by lived experiences (Clandinin, 2006). These stories connect teachers to their students, students to course content, and the researcher to the classroom dynamics to make meaning of a contextualized culture. This reciprocal relationship is the learner-centered model with me and participants on equal ground as learners.

Narrative inquiry releases control of the data from the researcher to the participant (Riessman, 1993). The benefit in exploring pedagogical strategies and classroom choices through conversational interviews is to determine perceived results of using film in instruction, but also a teacher's intent for developing and engaging with critical media literacy and interpretative skills. I sought to follow the dictum of Portelli (2015 in recognizing that "oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did" (p. 42); The approach to narrative inquiry for this study will follow a romantic style semi-structured interview process (Alvesson, 2011 and Pitre, 2013). This method is explained by Clandinin (2013) as the conversational approach to initiating and exploring stories.

> Although interviews can also be used to compose field texts with participants, conversation is far more commonly used. Conversations create a space for the stories of both participants and researchers to be composed and heard. Conversations are not guided by predetermined questions, or with intentions of being therapeutic, resolving issues, or providing answers to questions. Sometimes artifacts are used to trigger the telling of stories (pg. 45).

It is important to emphasize that the goal of this exploration is not to reach a definitive resolution. Rather, I examine how films contribute to the unique culture of a participant's classroom. I do not prescribe how films should be used or to establish best practices for history instruction; rather, I sought to offer participants an opportunity to share the contextualized culture of their own teaching environments. The objective is to facilitate an "epiphany moment" (Saldana, 2009, p. 111) through the "highly disciplined subjectivity" of narrative analysis in oral history (Parr, 2010, p. 4), which is discussed further in Chapter 5. This conversational approach allowed participants to guide the direction of the discussion and highlight key points for analysis (Pitre, 2013). These points served as the foundation for identifying themes during the analytical coding process (Schwandt, 2007). As a starting point, the six-point Enacted Personal Professional Learning (EPPL) model frame the analysis for participants:

- Environment (What do I encounter?)
- Behaviour (What do I do?)
- Competencies (What am I good at?)
- Beliefs (What do I believe in?)
- Identity (Who am I?)
- Mission (or spirituality) (Why do I exist? What greater entity do I feel connected with?) (Patterson, 2019, 32)

I apply a constructivist approach to participant stories, further described by Patterson (2019) as “the interplay between expert teachers’ and society’s constructions of meaning [that is] contingent on their own individual meaning-making, as well as being reliant on their societal context” (p. 72). Narrative inquiry allows for exploration and explanation of each unique experience in which expert teachers disclose unique attitudes and beliefs toward course content and the role of film in presenting, discussing, and thinking about that content. This will help to address the research questions:

1. How do APEURO readers construct an understanding of historical events from films?

2. How do/did APEURO readers understanding of historical events shaped by films impact their teaching practices?
3. What beliefs concerning the AP curriculum do APEURO readers hold that help or hinder their ability to use film in the classroom?

Positionality Statement

In narrative research, it is important to offer and explain positionality and identify why I as the author am interested in this research (Clandinin and Huber, 2010). Narrative studies are relational, with the researcher and the participant co-creating space with one another and relating to one another as the participant shares their stories. As such, positionality as a researcher becomes increasingly important to this narrative process. Here I share my connection to this research topic and how my background has influenced my engagement with this study.

I carry into this research biases that must be addressed, recognized, and consistently reflected upon. Through self-conscious reflexivity, I maintain awareness of how these biases shape my collection, interpretation, and analysis of data. This is in line with qualitative research methods in which interpretive models focus on doing "justice to the research done [by embracing] the role of subjectivity in the hermeneutical work." (Engles, 2022, p. 26). Lincoln (2013) describes this:

> Hermeneutic/dialectic methodology is carried out via a series of encounters between and among inquirer and respondents (inquiry participants) focusing on their initial constructions and aimed at developing reconstructions by a process in which all share equally.

The voice of each participant balances with my own voice as the researcher. This is achieved by acknowledging and consistently reevaluating positions of subjectivity. The points of subjectivity that must be addressed are:

1. I maintain close professional contact with my participants and in some cases friendships

for much of the time I have been an AP reader and in Leadership.

2. I am an APEURO teacher and reader with intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Read. This makes me a research insider.
3. As a classroom teacher, I maintained a consistent preference for film discussions and saw film as a vital tool for understanding history, historiography, and history pedagogy.

My research subjectivity can be a benefit by allowing me to make use of my own experience as a basis for understanding the community and practices inherent in this study (Drapeau, 2002, p. 3). At the same time, as a researcher I maintain caution and implement checks to ensure validity and reliability while addressing the biases through the inter- and intra-subjective dynamics of narrative inquiry (Hay, 2017).

The inter-subjective aspects have been formed from The Read for APEURO. Readers, specifically APEURO readers, are an isolated culture group that speak a specific language full of acronyms and shorthand. I am a community insider with my participants in that I have taught the same APEURO curriculum and scored AP exams at the same Read as participants. In all cases, participants are my colleagues and, in some cases, my friends. This worked to benefit my research in that our established relationship enhanced the free flow of conversational interviews and made semi-structured questioning more natural without devolving into a formless romanticization of experiences (Silverman, 1989). In this case, my subjectivity worked to provide a space for the expression of participant experiences because of, rather than opposed to, my status as an insider. This is the cultural curriculum of a common learner experience conducive to a constructivist interpretation of interview data. This is backed by qualitative methods in narrative:

> The first responsibility of narrative inquirers is always to participants. The negotiations of entry and exit, as well as the representation of experience, are

> central ethical concerns.... This thinking, our sensitivity to a relational orientation, is a methodological consideration that organizes what it is that counts as knowledge, as inquiry, and as knowledge of the practice for narrative inquirers. (Caine, 2013, p. 580)

Teachers, in my experience, do not have an issue with telling stories or relating experiences once they are engaged in professional discussions. I found this to be the case with all participant interviews. This links with a second benefit of my subjectivity in that I speak the language of the College Board and ETS. As with most bureaucratic systems focused on producing quantifiable measurements of student, and by proxy teacher, achievement there is a very specific language couched in rubrics, professional manuals, and a culture of experience unique to the AP scoring process. This connection to the content, the culture, and the participants was conducive to my sharing similar experiences both during the interviews and through my writing. Our mutual experiences created a shared inter-subjective constructivism, wherein our common participation, language, struggles, complaints as well as hope and goals for our classroom and the Read exist through familiarity (Hay, 2017).

My professional and personal connection to the participants also influenced the discussion surrounding their experiences with the use of film in the classroom. My preference for using film in my own teaching is a subjectivity that could result in placing undue emphasis on certain strategies and practices. My understanding of film in education comes from both a review of the literature on educational research and my own classroom experiences. In contrast, many practitioners who use film likely developed their methods through experience alone. This distinction highlights the importance of the constructivist framework, which calls for recognizing intra-subjective constructivism in the use of film (Hay, 2017). There is no definitive "right" or "wrong" way to use film when exploring teacher experiences. The aim here is narrative exploration, not pedagogical assessment or comparison. However, the stories shared between the

researcher and participants were treated as a dialogue between teacher and teacher, as well as between reader and reader. On occasion, my participants and I compared notes about overlapping or contradictory experiences, which, rather than detracting from the narrative, enriched the subjectivity of the storytelling process in ways that supported, rather than hindered, teaching practices (Patterson, 2019). This approach aligns with the cultural curriculum tenet that values knowledge from all sources while continually evaluating the validity of that knowledge. A key element of this process involved ensuring quality in the collection and interpretation of data.

Maintaining Quality in Qualitative Research

When considering qualitative data collection and analysis, the concern is achieving data "richness". I followed the model of the Eight 'Big-Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010). This criterion is expansive and allows for flexibility depending on the specific methods used. The 'Big-Tent' criteria include the following components: (a) worthy topic, (b), rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g), ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. Each of the eight individual criteria and their application in this study is detailed below.

- *Worthy Topic:* Good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, or evocative. An appropriate choice for a qualitative study can come from personal or societal events. For the personal, I have been an experienced AP rater for the past 18 years. Moreover, I have taught AP European history as well as AP World, Capstone Seminar, and Capstone Research. I mention this point not only to demonstrate my extensive experience and knowledge of the inner workings of the College Board social studies curriculum, but also to point out that AP, specifically AP European history, is an integral part of my career trajectory. Much as the AP read connected my transition from historian to educator, so

too does it maintain an important role as I transition from educator to education researcher. AP European History remains my connection between three worlds of academic history, education, and education research both in terms of keeping up with each profession and connecting with colleagues. A study that lacks relevancy to the researcher poses a threat to the study's quality level, as the researcher may not exercise enough care and concern regarding their research design and data collection processes. As noted in my positionality statement and literature review, this topic is important to me and contributes to the larger collective body of knowledge on this topic. This personal relevance is vital for connecting with my participants throughout the data collection process. On a societal level, the College Board curriculum has over the past 10 years undergone seismic changes that make this examination timely and relevant. As discussed in Chapter 1, the changes to the AP curriculum with the introduction of Seminar, Capstone, and now AFAM puts the *old guard* courses like APEURO into perspective. This makes an examination of APEURO teacher experiences and stories timely as part of a larger reflection on the College Board and ETS and their place in modern education. Moreover, with College Board's announcement in 2024 that the APEURO exam will be all digital in May 2025 the prospect of expanding the use of film, both primary source visuals and popular cinema, encourages highlighting the role these materials play in existing classrooms.

- *Rich Rigor:* Rigor is determined by the level of care and implementation a researcher puts into their data collection and analysis processes. The researcher applies a variety of analytical tactics to uncover nuance and complexity when interpreting data through the lens of theory (Tracy pg. 841 and Gutiérrez, 2014). Related theories and concepts serve

as multiple layers to explore the data. The triangulation of related theories as part of my conceptual framework provides a framework to better analyze my participant's narratives beyond thick description in pursuit of rigor (Tracy 2010). The crafting of the research design also serves to establish rigor. Details such as the number of interviews conducted, and participants selected contextualize the rigor of this study.

- *Sincerity:* Sincerity occurs when the researcher is honest and transparent about perspectives, biases, goals, and their role in establishing methods and findings (Tracy 2010). Sincerity positively influences how I show up as a researcher and how I communicate my positionality to my participants. It is vital to establish a rapport with participants, be transparent in the aims of this study, and express the desire for participant narratives to contribute to the literature on this topic. This is demonstrated in a continual process of reflexivity achieved through examination of my impact on participants throughout the interview and analysis process. Field notes serve as a mechanism for enhancing sincerity in documenting researcher's commentary about subjective feelings and the meaning-making process (Tracy, 2010).
- *Credibility:* Credibility is understood to refer to the trustworthiness and plausibility of the research findings. In positivist or quantitative research methods, creditability refers to the reliability, replicability, consistency, and accuracy of the research data; however, in qualitative research, credibility is achieved through rich, thick description, triangulation of data, and multivocality (Tracy, 2010). Triangulation operates from the assumption that if two or more data sources, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or researchers arrive at the same conclusion in qualitative research, they provide more credibility to the findings (Tracy, 2010). Data triangulation in qualitative research is

essential because it allows the researcher to use multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical lenses to explore problems. Triangulation inherently increases the research scope, deepens the understanding of the research, and encourages consistent reinterpretation of the data (Tracy, 2010). As part of this study, I use course guidelines for AP European History, individual interviews, and film analysis to achieve triangulation. Multivocality is a researcher trying to show connection between participants by implementing strategies that encourage reflection (Tracy, 2010). This concept of multivocality allows the researcher to assess whether the participants find the researcher's insights meaningful. Multivocality will occur with second interviews and participant feedback on analytical points drawn from their stories.

- *Resonance:* Resonance is the researcher's connection with the professional community through meaningful contribution with the potential to create "empathic validity" (Tracy 2010, pg. 844). Empathic validity is achieved through creating mutual trust wherein participants speak openly about classroom practices, goals, and aspirations for moments of connection through the common language of film. Another component that falls under this category is that of generalizability. In qualitative methods, researchers should frame their findings in a way that the readers of a study can make determinations and associations based on their own understanding of the findings presented (Tracy 2010). Generalizability should be determined from within a study, not necessarily across studies. Resonance with this participant group is demonstrated anecdotally through discussions of film in the classroom. APEURO readers are excited to address film both as learners, film enthusiasts, and teachers. Mentioning this project to APEURO readers informally solicits detailed responses by teachers excited to share their experiences and eager to demonstrate

their tactics and strategies for employing film. This topic resonates on an emotional as well as an intellectual level with teachers. The goal is to illicit similar responses during participant interviews.

- *Significant Contribution:* Qualitative research adds to the current body of literature or knowledge in a particular topic area. Specifically, it should “bring clarity to confusion, make visible what is hidden or inappropriately ignored, and generate a sense of insight and deepened understanding” (Tracy, 1995, p. 209). This is achieved by demonstrating a need to go beyond current research by building upon and possibly critiquing the current theoretical frameworks (Tracy, 2010). Of multiple types of accessible ways to apply significance - conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically, and heuristically - this research project pursues the *heuristic* significance defined as follows "develop[ing] novel concepts that can be further questioned and explored in other settings” setting the stage for future research (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). This deep dive in APEURO narratives sets the stage for wider looks at other AP social studies, Seminar, and Capstone. More significant is this study of an *old guard* social studies course during a period of transition to a digital format. Moreover, procedures and findings of this project can be inform future exploration and research into practices for other AP courses including AFAM once that course becomes public in 2025.
- *Ethics:* Ethical criteria in qualitative research involves four types of ethical considerations: procedural ethics, situational ethics, relational ethics, and exit ethics (Tracy, 2010). ‘Procedural ethics’ refer to the processes of ensuring proper protocol is followed. For example, this includes receipt of Institutional Review Board approval, clarity between researcher and participant about the nature and potential risks of

participation in the study, and participants' right to withdraw their participation at any point during the research. Clarification for participants is illustrated in the Informed Consent form, which they receive prior to the interview. 'Situational ethics' refer to the researcher's ability to manage situations that may arise in a way that minimizes harm for the participant and everyone involved. 'Relational ethics' refer to the general ethic of care a researcher must engage in that involves being mindful of their character, actions, and consequences that they may have on others. Part of this is also providing opportunities for participants to engage in the research and return to it and share their own findings. An example is providing access to the full study upon completion. Finally, 'exit ethics' refers to how the researcher engages with and shares the research findings. Ethical consideration involves responsibly managing the data; researchers share aspects of the data they find interesting but also ensure that the data shared is related to the research questions.

- *Meaningful Coherence:* Meaningfully coherent studies achieve several standards. They 1. achieve their stated purpose, 2. accomplish what they intend to, 3. use methods and representation practices that align with their chosen theories and research orientations, and 4. appropriately connect literature with research design, methods, and findings (Tracy, 2010). A primary component in this section is that the researcher's representation of the data aligns with the research study's goals. These considerations take place in the design and implementation stages and amongst the analytical interpretations that arise. For meaningful coherence of the study to occur, the research implications and conclusions must also connect and align with the presented literature; otherwise, the findings may not align, which is a valid outcome, but there needs to be some semblance

of linkage that addresses why the findings are presented in the way that they are. This perspective may be presented as a model that proposes a universal criterion for the maintenance of quality in qualitative research and serves to bridge differing frameworks under qualitative research (Tracy 2010).

Data Sources

There are no clear guidelines on the appropriate sample size to reach saturation for a narrative study (Mason, 2010); however, qualitative methods guidelines suggest that sample sizes tend to range from 1 to 10 for qualitative research (Cresswell, 2011). The targeted number of participants for this study was 10 APERUO readers, which I was able to recruit and maintain. Data collected from interviews addressed films commonly used in APEURO history classrooms. Given institutional ethnography's tenet of prioritizing experience over individual identity, purposive sampling was ideal, because it allowed me to intentionally select participants who had shared, common experience. Out of the possible types of purposive sampling available, I employed criterion sampling because the emphasis in this research was on participants with a common experience (Patton, 1990). Interview participants were recruited from AP European history readers designated as *experienced* by ETS and the College Board. These participants are familiar with the College Board curriculum and the course requirements. They have had opportunities to adjust their use of sources, including films, to reflect the AP standards should they deem that necessary.

The criteria for participants are as follows:

1. Participants will have taught AP European History for at least three years. This is the minimum number of years required by the Educational Testing Service for a secondary teacher to serve as an AP rater.

2. Participants will have attended at least one College Board Summer Institute for AP European History. This is part of the College Board certification process for AP teachers and AP courses offered in secondary schools. This applies to public and private institutions that offer AP courses.
3. Participants will have been employed by Educational Testing Services for at least one year to score AP exams during a summer session. Being employed by ETS is validation of a teacher's credentials with AP courses. Teachers who have participated in the summer reading are considered *experience raters* by the College Board. Moreover, by using this criterion there is a level of balance among participants in terms of experience and knowledge of the AP exam scoring process.
4. None of the participants recruited for this study are readers or TLs under my supervision nor are they ELs, ACRs, or CRs with position and authority over me as a QL.

Recruitment occurred in the Summer of 2024. Participants receive a *waiver of documentation for consent* form. Initial interviews were conducted in the months following the 2024 Read, August-September 2024. Follow up interviews occurred during the Fall semester September-December 2024. Distance and cost required that these interviews take place over ZOOM. This has the added benefit of providing recording and transcription. ZOOM transcripts were reviewed and edited for clarity and transcription errors.

In qualitative methods the objective is to achieve and demonstrate richness in data often defined as:

> the quality of revealing participants thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as context and structures... [to offer] views of human experience that etiquette, social conventions and inaccessibility hide or minimize in ordinary discourse (Charmaz, 2003, p. 88–89).

I achieved data saturation by identifying commonalities among participants, such as

overlapping strategies, references to the College Board curriculum, and, most importantly, detailed descriptions of stories related to learning from, teaching with, and using mainstream movies as historical sources in the classroom (Guest, 2006).

Internal Review Board (IRB) considerations are minimal for participants as they are adult, non-vulnerable populations who are willing volunteers. This study involves minimal risk as it is a voluntary series of interviews about classroom practices. All participants are academic professionals willing to share their classroom experiences. Member checking occurred at two stages to ensure participants were accurately represented. The first member-check followed each interview session where full transcripts, edited only for accuracy and clarity, were delivered to participants. For the second member-check, participants were sent Chapter 4 and given 62 days, December 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025, to review and determine that they had been accurately represented in the data presentation. No participants chose to withdraw at either point and minor revisions were made by participant requests (Lincoln, 1985). There was no professional risk involved in participation. There are no further institutional permissions needed as interviews focused on participants as individual educators and not as representatives of their school, district, or state. Participants are not representatives of either the College Board or Educational Testing Services.

Data Collection

Data collection followed a semi-structured interview guide using open-ended questions (Seidman, 1998). Semi-structured interviewing refers to an interviewing technique wherein written questions exist to prompt discussion with additional questions emerging during the interview that encourage participants to expand on their responses. Semi-structured interviewing allowed me to review and revise interview questions based on data gathered from previous

interviews. This flexibility in the interviewing process follows a feminist interviewing model that identifies a clear understanding of the power dynamics and hierarchical relationship between the researcher and participants (DeVault & Gross, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). 60- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews were recorded via ZOOM video with the participants' consent. I utilized field notes throughout the interview process to capture "the temporal, the personal and social, and place" as it relates to the participant (Clandinin, 2006, p. 48). Notes are used to highlight changes in voice, tone, expressions, and attitude for responses not captured in the transcript. Narrative themes emerged from the story's content overall, including the linguistic content and the sequence in which the stories were told (Bamberg et al., 2011). The additional components captured in the field notes served a vital function for contextualizing the data collected. The interview protocol for a narrative inquiry typically includes between five to seven interview questions (Creswell, 2007). This study begins with seven main questions and one question for a potential follow-up interview. As was anticipated, these questions were supplemented by additional *probe questions* to elicit more detailed responses (Riessman, 1993, p. 55). The interview protocol was designed in response to this study's overarching research questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts openly and allow participant stories to lead the conversation (Riessman, 2002). The interview protocol's semi-structured nature allowed participants to take the lead in the meaning-making process. Guiding interview questions are listed in the Appendix with the caveat that each interview explored specific topics or stories brought up by the interviewee.

Data Analysis

Mr. Pink (portrayed by Steve Buscemi): *Why am I Mr. Pink?*
- *Reservoir Dogs (1992)*

Once I received the ZOOM transcriptions, I read through them while listening to the

audio file and edited for accuracy and time stamps. With this initial read I de-identified any personal information about participants and their school districts. At this point I inserted pseudonyms into the transcripts. Pseudonyms were chosen at random using an online name generator. Physical copies of the raw data continue to be stored on a USB drive locked away in my home. Upon compiling interview transcripts, I reviewed each ZOOM file for each participant's interview without taking any notes. Revisiting the ZOOM file a second time I recorded memo notes indicating interesting data not previously captured. At this point in the data analysis process, significant features of the narratives were connected to themes and concepts found in the conceptual frameworks used to construct this study (Riessman, 1993; Saldaña, 2015). At the end, this was verified through member checking of transcripts and thematic analysis (Lincoln, 1985).

The coding process followed an inductive approach to allow themes to emerge naturally from the data (Saldana, 2009; see appendix). The analysis began with an inductive reading of the interview transcripts without predetermined categories. Significant segments were highlighted based on recurring ideas such as moments of heightened emotion, outlines of teaching strategies, references to the curriculum, stories of student engagement, and reflections on the importance of film for historical learning. The goal of open coding is to break down the data into meaningful units, and through this process, initial codes were assigned distinct color codes: emotion in red, teaching strategies in blue, curriculum references in green, student engagement in yellow, and historical learning in purple. This inductive approach allowed the researcher to remain open to the nuances in the data, ensuring that the codes emerged organically from the teachers' experiences (Braun, 2006).

The initial in vivo coding set the stage for axial coding phase in which color-coded segments were analyzed to identify broader patterns and themes (See **Table 1**). The theme of *Teachers as Learners* emerged from moments where teachers expressed how their use of film in the classroom led to personal growth and professional development. These insights were often coded in red (emotion) and purple (historical learning), highlighting the emotional responses and reflections teachers had on how film enhanced their own understanding of history and teaching practices (Saldana, 2009). The axial coding phase involves linking these codes to form coherent categories that reveal the deeper meaning in the data. The theme of *Teachers as Teachers* emerged from codes in blue (teaching strategies) and green (curriculum references), reflecting how teachers used films to align with the APEURO curriculum while fostering critical thinking. These moments illustrated how educators strategically incorporated films as a tool to engage students with historical content, reinforcing curriculum objectives and teaching strategies (Charmaz, 2014).

The final theme, *Teachers Using Film Responsibly*, was identified through codes in yellow (student engagement) and purple (historical learning), which revealed teachers' emphasis on the need for responsible film selection in terms of district and state regulations, age appropriateness, and the importance of guiding students in critically analyzing intense historical content. By using an inductive coding approach, the multifaceted ways in which teachers navigate the complexities of film in the classroom, balancing emotional, strategic, curricular, and classroom culture considerations. Ultimately, the themes of *Teachers as Learners*, *Teachers as Teachers*, and *Teachers Using Film Responsibly* reflect the nuanced and intentional ways teachers integrate film into their teaching practices, as seen through the inductive coding process.

Table 1

In-vivo Code	Axial Code	Coding Color
"I was surprised at some of the depth..."	Historical Learning	Purple
"I thought there would not be much that was accurate..."	Historical Learning	Purple
"It was more Josephine than I had anticipated."	Historical Learning	Purple
"They made him look neurotic and like a wimp."	Emotion	Red
"It just seemed very bizarre."	Emotion	Red
"The kids were all chattering..."	Student Engagement	Yellow
"It illustrates what naval combat is like at sea."	Curriculum	Green
"What is it like when a cannonball hits the side of a wooden ship?"	Curriculum	Green
"You've got these teenage officers in charge of an entire ship."	Student Engagement	Yellow
"Schindler’s List does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was."	Teaching Strategies	Blue
"Everything just clicked for me."	Emotion	Red
"Let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe."	Teaching Strategies	Blue
"I was surprised at some of the depth..."	Historical Learning	Purple

As part of this narrative study, I analyzed the data in three phases: 1. analysis of storytelling elements in the interviews involving film and learning history, 2. thematic analysis across interviews on experiences with film in relation to the APEURO curriculum, and 3. relevant stories related to film and learning that emerge during the interview process. First, I engaged in the memo notes process described above. Analyses occurred during two different readings of the transcripts. The first reading examined the priority areas that emerged from participants. For the storytelling analysis, I focused on words or phrases emphasized in participant stories and what parts of stories seem conspicuous in their absence (Patterson, 2019). Interpretation extended with the assumption that construction may occur without awareness on the part of the constructor, in this case the interview participant (Lincoln, 2013, p. 52). Dialogue used in the participant narratives from this study were kept in-tact rather than being reduced to descriptive codes. This effort serves to legitimize participants' words and phrasings and maintaining the meaning of the stories without substituting their words or phrases for another; however, some editing was necessary after sharing transcripts with participants. For the functional analysis, I focused on the larger implications of the narratives to develop an understanding of the narrative's culturally relevant aspects (Patterson, 2019). After completing this analysis, I created summary regrouping of the participant narratives based on themes and comparing these inductive themes across all participants. This led to thematic analysis for my second analytic step, focusing on finding overarching themes (Riessman's, 1993). Narrative structure helps to understand why a participant chooses to structure stories the way they did, and the added value found there (Riessman, 1993). I compared themes across all participants to determine the prevalence of the given themes, grouping related themes that identified unifying codes amongst the participants. The prevalence of each unifying code was subsequently ranked and then distilled into salient

themes. The final analytical step was in assessing and retelling the story of the interviews formulated into a constructed narrative. This involves evaluation and re-evaluation of methods, conversation points, and points of mutual understanding or divergence and representing these elements in a cohesive, fictional yet functional, story set at the Read. These analytical points triangulate the data for broader implications.

Constructed Narrative from Collected Data

I chose the methodology of narrative inquiry because it best represents participant experiences that involve beliefs, emotions, and self-reflections that emerge when sharing classroom stories. Teaching history can be very emotional. The same can be said about watching a good movie. Participants relating stories on the use of film in their classroom to teach APEURO often became excited or grave, exuded pride, and, on a few occasions, showed embarrassment during our conversations. These emotional responses reflect the deep connection participants have to their teaching practices and to the material they present in the classroom. Narrative inquiry, with its emphasis on the subjective experience, allows for these emotions and personal connections to be explored and understood in context. By analyzing the stories shared, I looked past the simple examination of how films were used as educational tools to uncover moments in which films impacted participants' identities, beliefs, and teaching philosophies. This method of inquiry helped capture the complexity of participant experiences, offering a more holistic view of how film serves as both an instructional tool and a means for learners to engage with each other on a deeper, more personal level. Teaching with film matters to these participants.

The same range of emotions were apparent when discussing the Read, shifts in ETS policies, and recent changes with the EOC that might bring the in-person Read to an end. As

participants reflected on these changes, there was a sense of uncertainty and loss, a recognition that the tradition of gathering and sharing professional experiences might soon be disrupted. I recognize these expressions because I feel much the same way as these participants. We are all experienced readers who have been traveling to see each other year after year for a long time. It is emotional to think that it might come to an end. The Read, much like the use of film in the classroom, has created a community built on shared experiences, mutual respect, and a deep commitment to historical knowledge. For many, the thought of that chapter closing brings a sense of nostalgia and a desire to preserve what has been so valuable. These emotional responses, intertwined with the evolving landscape of education, highlight the powerful connection between professional identity and the spaces where that identity is formed and nurtured. As we face these changes, the stories shared by participants become even more significant, serving as a reminder of the enduring importance of the APEURO community.

I believe the best way to present a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, attitudes, and emotions with the gathered data is through a fictional constructed narrative developed from interview transcripts of all 10 participants. This narrative approach aligns with qualitative research methodologies that embrace storytelling as a means of meaning-making. Narrative inquiry allows for the creation of fictionalized composites that reflect the experiences and voices of participants while maintaining ethical standards by protecting confidentiality (Clandinin, 2000). By constructing a fictional narrative, the research ensures that the essence of participants' stories is preserved, while also offering a holistic representation that may not be achievable through direct quotations alone.

Fictionalized composites are often employed in qualitative research to emphasize the interpretive nature of data and to highlight the broader themes and patterns within individual

experiences (Riessman, 2008). This method provides a space for the researcher to reflect on the intersubjectivity of the research process, acknowledging the role of researcher subjectivity in shaping the final narrative (Saldana, 2009). While the characters and scenarios within the constructed narrative are fictionalized, they are rooted in coded data from the interviews, ensuring that the representation remains true to the participants' lived experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). This approach has been widely adopted in educational research as it allows for a richer, more accessible presentation of complex participant experiences (Denzin, 2011).

The use of a fictional constructed narrative maintains a balance between individual participant identities and the overall thematic analysis. By blending multiple experiences into a cohesive, fictionalized narrative, the study ensures that the voice of each participant is represented without compromising the privacy or authenticity of the data (Clandinin, 2010). This narrative construction serves not only as a tool for deeper analysis but also to engage readers with the lived realities of the participants in a meaningful and relatable manner.

Summary

A constructivist understanding of teacher narratives built upon classroom experiences with feature films allows for a broad exploration of the meaning-making process. Within the confines of the College Board curriculum and the structures of the Read, APEURO readers find ways to let their personalities, goals, hopes, ambitions, and historical training establish a place in their classroom. The use of mainstream feature films is only one facet of this declaration of intellectual independence; however, it is a powerful common language they share with society, themselves, each other, their students, and with me.

Chapter 4: Data Representation and the Narrative

Profiling Participants

Given the nature of the APEURO course as an overwhelmingly White subject taught by mostly White teachers, the Read is a predominantly White space. The Read is mostly balanced between male and female readers. To reflect typical APEURO readers, participants in this study are all White identifying with six men and four women. Participants are spread across multiple US states including New Jersey, Florida, Missouri, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Virginia, and Tennessee. Eight are in public schools and two are in private schools. All have been teachers and readers for over a decade. This is a highly educated group. In total among the 10 participants there are 11 bachelor's degrees, 14 master's degrees and two Ph.Ds., as well as 8 professional teacher certifications or licenses. See **Table 2** for a summary of participants.

What follows is an in-depth analysis of interview transcripts presented through a constructed narrative. The purpose is to highlight the shared themes, insights, and personal stories that emerged across participants' accounts. By weaving these individual narratives together, I present a richer understanding of the use of film to teach history, emphasizing unique perspectives while also exploring common threads that unite the participants' experiences. The narrative approach allows for a holistic representation of the participants' voices, providing both depth and context to the collected data on classroom practices, the use of film to understand and teach history, and our connection to each other as participants in the Read.

Prologue – A demonstration of all the themes in action

I had been anticipating the release of *Napoleon* (2023) for several reasons. First, I have

Table 2

Name	M/F	Degree(s)	Years Teaching	Public or Private	Currently Teaching AP Euro (2024-2025)	Additional Courses Taught
Anastasia	F	BA History MA History PhD History	18	Private	Yes	Honors European History AP Psychology Historical Methods and Research AP World History Honors World History College US History
Angelica	F	BA Sociology MA International Studies MA Public Policy	25	Public	No	Algebra 1 Algebra 2 Street Law AP World History AP Human Geography Geometry Florida History Special Education Global Studies Cooking AP Art History
Baldwin	M	BA English Literature MA Classical Languages	22	Private	Yes	AP Literature and Composition Latin 1 Latin 2 Latin 3 Latin 4 British Literature
Bill	M	BA History MA School Counseling	29	Public	No	AP US History African American Studies

Table 2 Continued

Name	M/F	Degree(s)	Years Teaching	Public or Private	Currently Teaching AP Euro (2024-2025)	Additional Courses Taught
		MA Library Sciences				American Government World History Media Specialist
Dale	M	BA Communicat-ions MA Curriculum and Instruction	32	Public	Yes	IB History Ancient History Geography Film Studies American Government
Gale	F	BA History MA Educational Leadership MA Teaching	21	Public	Yes	Sociology World History Holocaust and Genocide AP Seminar
Leopold	M	BA English Literature MA English Literature MA European History PhD Childhood Studies	21	Public	Yes	AP Seminar AP Research British Literature World Literature
Lucas	M	BA Political Science MA Political Science MA Education	28	Public	Yes	AP World History World History US History
Tabitha	F	BA Mechanical Engineering MA History and	18	Public	Yes	AP Psychology AP Human Geography Film Studies

Table 2 Continued

Name	M/F	Degree(s)	Years Teaching	Public or Private	Currently Teaching AP Euro (2024-2025)	Additional Courses Taught
		Geography Education				World Geography
Webster	M	BA History	32	Public	Yes	Freshman History Gifted Freshman History American Cultures Geography Civics and Government

long been a fan of both Ridley Scott and Joaquin Phoenix, particularly in their previous joint project *Gladiator* (2000). Second, I had recently reread *Napoleon: A Life* (Roberts, 2014) as part of my coursework and I was eager to see how Hollywood matched up with Andrew Robert's popular history emplotment. Third, Napoleon Bonaparte is a historical figure who looms large in the APEURO curriculum. Bonaparte is an easy reference point for academic analysis of 19th-century European politics and the plethora of available primary sources surrounding his reign pretty much guarantees that he will show up on the EOC. Finally, Bonaparte is accessible via the cultural curriculum as shorthand for a historical figure comparable to Abraham Lincoln or Julius Caesar.[19] Bonaparte pops up in mainstream media ranging from literary cameos in *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1846) and *War and Peace* (1867), episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Futurama,* satire films like *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), and Abba's signature song *Waterloo* performed at the 1974 Eurovision. This new version provides fertile ground for discussion of a recent film and its potential place in an APEURO classroom. While I was eager to see *Napoleon* (2023), I carefully tempered my expectations. I distinctly remember thinking that the life and times of Napoleon Bonaparte could not possibly be sufficiently covered in a 3-hour film (actual runtime is 2 hours and 38 minutes), especially if examining this Hollywood creation from a critical historical lens. The filmmakers were going to make artistic choices about their representation, and I was going to have to judge the film based solely on what they intended to create, rather than if the film fit my definition of historical representation. After the film, I

[19] This is a debatable, yet I believe reasonable statement for students and teachers in APEURO. An unofficial, non-academic source for this statement can be found with Time Magazines assertion that Napoleon ranks just behind Jesus as a recognizable historical figure based on google data. It is data that is skewed toward the demographic that is likely to be involved with a course such as APEURO. See, https://ideas.time.com/2013/12/10/whos-biggest-the-100-most-significant-figures-in-history/.

wondered how other APEURO teachers would interpret the decisions made by Scott and Phoenix in terms of cinematic emplotment of Bonaparte. Participants, it turned out, were eager to share their thoughts.

Overall, I found *Napoleon* (2023) to be a bit quirky and somewhat drawn out. And yet, *Napoleon* (2023) also provided an interesting post-modern semi-critical approach to Bonaparte. On first viewing, *Napoleon* (2023) is not a film I instinctually think would be useful to show in APEURO as it focuses heavily on Bonaparte's personality, foibles, and tumultuous relationship with Josephine. These types of details have yet to appear on the EOC. I think the movie should have been called Napoleon and Josephine since that relationship was the focal point of the cinematic narrative. It is hard to imagine a film about Napoleon wherein the Battle of Waterloo felt tacked on, yet that is how I felt by the end. It seems like it would be a marketing decision to avoid proclaiming the relationship as the central focus for this film; however, by advertising *Napoleon* (2023) as about anything else may have frustrated consumers looking for a more traditional narrative about Bonaparte the general, the conqueror, the statesman, etc. I found this to be the case when *Napoleon* (2023) came up during interviews.

I note here that I did not bring up *Napoleon* (2023) in the first round of interviews. Participants chose to bring this film up on their own, at which point we shared thoughts and reactions. What follows is a constructed conversation pulled from five interviewees (Anastasia, Angelica, Leopold, Lucas, and Webster) who volunteered their take on *Napoleon* (2023) and two (Baldwin and Bill) whom I asked for their thoughts on the film in a follow-up interview. This did not occur as a conversation between multiple participants; however, when put side by side, it seems the participants were talking with each other in the way they related to the film, their interpretation, broader connections to other films and genres, and the potential role of this film in

their classroom. This constructed narrative conversation contains aspects of the main themes that emerge from all interviews including:

- Teachers as learners of history – They use film to inform their own historical understanding and in turn evaluate a film's historical value based on existing interpretations of narratives in history.
- Teachers as teachers – They seek to use film to supplement specific academic curriculum as well as for creative historical thinking activities that encourage student engagement.
- Teachers using films responsibly – They are using film in a way that maximizes learning within limited time constraints and in determining what is appropriate for their students to learn in a high school classroom.

These themes serve as a prologue to the greater narrative exploration of these themes individually in later sections. It also serves the purpose of introducing some of the cast of characters that will carry us through this exploration of film for building historical narratives. This is in line with narrative-based data representation as discussed by Willis's in *The Use of Composite Narratives to Present Interview Findings* (2018).

Scene 1 – History Teachers Watch Napoleon (2023)

I sit at a table with Webster, Lucas, and Angelica outside the Alamo, a draft-house style movie theater in downtown Kansas City. It is the first night of the Read and we are unwinding after a long day of scoring. There is always a lot of social energy on the first night since most of us have not been in contact all year. We are waiting for our colleagues, Anastasia and Leopold, who are inside watching *Napoleon* (2023) which has been rereleased for a special screening. We are discussing our experiences with this film and its potential for our classroom. Webster takes the lead in the conversation.

Webster: We have taken students to the local movie theater 2 different times. We went to see *Napoleon (2023)* when it came out, the recent Ridley Scott. We took our AP classes. Actually, we took all our history classes that were studying Napoleon. The theater opened up in the morning for us, and they had a private showing for our students, which was super cool. We previously did that for *12 Years a Slave* (2013), but not for APEURO. We did that for all our other classes.

Matt: Hmm any thoughts on *Napoleon* (2023)?

Webster: I thought there was more accuracy than I would have expected. I thought there would not be much that was accurate, but there were little pieces and nuances that I was surprised at. I know a lot of people were really disappointed with it. I went in thinking it was gonna be pretty terrible and not cover a good story. And I thought it did okay. I just thought it was weird, like his affect, and everything was a little bit odd, like how he carried himself! And it was more Josephine than I had anticipated. But I went in like it was a Ridley Scott movie. I knew it was gonna be focusing on giant battles and epic scenes and stuff like that. So, there was enough there. I was fine with it. How about you? What do you think?

In conversations, Webster consistently reverses questions to ask others about their thoughts. It is a personality trait that I find makes Webster a very easy person to like.

Matt: I was gonna say, I kind of had the same or similar experience. It wasn't that I necessarily had low expectations going in, but it was more like, “Okay, Napoleon’s life story is huge. Even if this is a 3-hour movie, there's no way they could cover everything. I'm just gonna have to accept whatever artistic license

they chose, and then assess it, based on what they chose to do."

Webster: That's kind of what I'm saying is, I was surprised at some of the depth of the pieces of the research they did, and some of the things that they showed. There were things like, "Oh, why wouldn't you cover this, or why didn't you include that?" But I had to step back and say, "well, you can't cover everything." So, I thought they did okay.

Matt: Is there any specific part that really stuck out to you?

Webster: The relationship at the end with Josephine getting the visits from [Tsar] Alexander [I]. I didn't know that happened. I had no idea. Once Josephine was divorced, from the point for me, I just didn't really pay any attention to her after that, so I had no idea that was going on. I remember there were a couple of things that I was surprised they included. I wasn't a big fan of the lake-cannonball scene and that kind of stuff, you know. I'm like, it's the river. And he didn't do that and historically it was Napoleon's troops that drown and blah blah, you know. But again it's a Ridley Scott movie.

Matt: It's more fun this way.

Webster: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Lucas: It's great for showing battle scenes and his love life, I guess, if somehow you wanted to show that. And his insecurities. But there's just so much missed, isn't there? Just kind of a very interesting view of his character as a persecuted, complex type of guy. I think they tried to do too much in one film, right? Showing his whole life.

This is the kind of point expected from Lucas. He is a walking encyclopedia for

APEURO. This description refers to him both as a fount of knowledge and also as an adherent to old school style learning wherein encyclopedias in physical form still serve a tangible purpose. Lucas proudly states that he still requires students to take notes in pencil despite the availability of electronic devices.

Angelica: I watched it on the plane. I have to confess, I dozed a bit. I must have slept through all the battle scenes. But the dynamic between Napoleon and Josephine is an interesting story. It is not an especially relevant story, but I have to confess that I used to go into that with students when I talked about Napoleon. I was trying to, you know, grab the interest of my students. I'm just struggling to make historical figures come alive for students, so I focus on soap opera-like details, such as Josephine's infidelities and similar topics.

That Angelica watched this film on a plane is to be expected. She is a world traveler who takes every opportunity to visit new places. Her classroom is decorated with poster-sized photographs she has taken in Gallipoli, Ypres, the Republic of Georgia, and Finland to name a few places. She watched *Napoleon* (2022) on her flight home from a Baltic cruise.

Leopold and Anastasia enter and join us at the table. They had just come from the theater and it is clear that they have thoughts. Leopold and Anastasia are both trained historians with advanced degrees in history. Leopold wrote his master's thesis on the French Revolution. This suggests to me that he might have strong opinions on any representation of Napoleon Bonaparte. This proved to be the case.

Leopold: I just watched that Napoleon movie and I thought it was not very well done.

Webster: Oh, yeah? Why's that?

Leopold*:* Well, I mean they made him look like he was neurotic and like a wimp. I don't want to curse here, but they make him look like a pussy. That he was sort of controlled by his woman. I don't know if it was just, what's his name?

Webster: Phoenix?

Leopold: Yeah, I don't know if it was just the way he played it. He just did not... To me it was not accurate in so many ways. It just seemed very bizarre.

Anastasia (she/her): I found *Napoleon* (2023) to be absolutely abysmal. I was not happy with it. You know, as a historian, sometimes it's hard to watch movies like this, but, I mean, one of my favorite movies is *Gladiator* (2000). It's horribly, historically inaccurate. Still, as a historian, I tend to see the genre of historical films through the lens of "Are they telling me a good story." I tend, if I like the story, to overlook the historical inaccuracies. Like, I love Bridgerton, right? But I don't think it's pretending to be historically accurate, either. And so, when we're working under the pretense of trying to be historically accurate, my expectations are a little bit higher. And when we're very deliberately playing with the genre and know that we're taking liberties. Then I'm like, "Okay, I get it. That's fine."

Anastasia is the only one in our group with a Ph.D. in history. She is an active member of numerous historical societies and associations. Her knowledge of the academic side of the historical field gives a lot of weight to her arguments. It is interesting to see Anastasia the historian's attempts to reconcile with Anastasia, the fan of blockbuster movies. As is the case with many of use at this table, a good historical movie or television series can make a professional forget they are supposed to be analytical and allow them to enjoy the show. She did not think *Napoleon* (2023) did that.

Matt: And you felt *Napoleon* (2023) was pretending to be accurate, and not open about the liberties it was taking?

Anastasia (she/her): Yeah. In a way.

Matt: Okay. Sure. So, what about Gladiator (2000)? Why is that something that you enjoyed.

Anastasia (she/her): I think the story is compelling. It follows this character, and it has the sort of story ... I mean, obviously like Commodus didn't die in the ring, killed by a gladiator. He did fight in gladiatorial events, actually, though or at least that's what some of the sources tell us he did. He was universally hated as Emperor and so they skirted the boundaries by creating this very clearly fictional character. And so, I think it being more fictional allows them to play a little bit more. But with *Napoleon* (2023), where all those people were real. Yeah. ... I mean, when you're telling a story of somebody's life, you're going to have to cut things. Having read a couple of biographies of Napoleon. I guess it didn't jive with my understanding of who Napoleon was, and so it kind of grated at me a little bit. It was so choppy.

Leopold: I like *Gladiator* (2000) even if it's completely, historically, inaccurate. I mean, I like *Braveheart* (1995), which is also historically inaccurate. There's just a lot of the movies... I think they make decisions for Hollywood, or try to make them look different.

I think I am starting to see a pattern in both Leopold's and Anastasia's reaction to *Napoleon* (2023). I wonder if anyone else is picking up on the desire to see military leaders as hyper masculine, authoritative, and in control. That might explain why

Phoenix's portrayal of Bonaparte is met with resistance here, especially if we are comparing him to a Maximus or a William Wallace seen in movies. Lucas interjects a thought.

> **Lucas:** I remember when Braveheart came out in ‘95, no one knew anything about Scotland except for Braveheart.
>
> **Anastasia (she/her):** Yeah, I mean in that movie [Braveheart], again, I think it's a great story, but as a medievalist, I'm like, Nope! I'm like “that is not how they fought back then. They didn't have tartans. Nobody's putting blue on their face that matched their eyes perfectly!” I did love the actor who played Edward I! He’s so over the top. I would go so far to sas he was probably one of the best parts of that movie! But accurate...?
>
> **Leopold:** Even that movie *Alexander* (2004), I thought, was very inaccurate, but it's entertaining. I'll watch it. As I said, I'm not going to avoid a film because it's not accurate. I mean Shakespeare did historical plays that were misread or misconceived. But he doesn't necessarily paint the situation from 100% historical accuracy. Richard III appears to be a lot different in the movie than how he really was. They make Henry V look like he's some sort of demigod or something.
>
> **Matt**: Sure. So, you don't feel *Napoleon* (2023) was very accurate, and you didn't like it. And then, of course, *Gladiator* (2000) is not very accurate, but you did like it. I think I could probably guess why. Accuracy is part of your assessment, but also, sometimes you just want to enjoy the movie.
>
> **Leopold**: Right.
>
> **Matt**: Gladiator is more of a blockbuster where Napoleon is, well, making him

into a pussy.

Leopold: Right, yeah.

Matt: Okay, fair enough.

Anastasia (she/her)*:* When you look at a story like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928), it is written by somebody who experienced the war but is designed to be fictional. When you make that into a movie like in 2022, I think they sort of think about it in the same way. You want the movie to be true to the novel, and in large part it was. It was accurate to the narrative, as you understand it, to be. It feels the way that it should. It feels like it's honoring the story. I don't think that *Napoleon* (2023) honored that narrative in the same way I would have wanted it to. I thought they sold Napoleon short. Like, you think about the story of Napoleon, and it was like they didn't do it justice. So, there's sort of the two narratives in thinking about Napoleon. There's the great general and the great reformer, depending on how you want to take that narrative right? I don't think they did either version of him justice because there's no sense of him as the sort of statesman at all. And then it's this weird story of his relationship with Josephine that I don't think was accurate either.

Angelica: You don't think so?

Anastasia (she/her): It was weird. I was like, "what are we doing with this relationship here?" And like, as a story, there were such huge gaps! I think, for anybody watching it, if they know Napoleon's life, they're like, "wait a minute!" And if they don't, they would still be like "wait a minute!" Because they wouldn't know what was missing and that would create problems for them. It was very

choppy.

At this point Angelica, in fashion typical of her very active mind, takes the conversation a bit off track with her comparison of historical narratives to science fiction narratives. Listening to Angelica make intellectual connections across genres is to get a glimpse into her classroom style. One must stay alert to keep up with her rapid analytical thinking.

Angelica: I see your point. *Napoleon* (2023) sort of felt to me like *Dune* (1984). Did you see the original movie with Sting and Kyle MacLachlan? That was a movie that I think started out being 8-hours long, and they trimmed it to 2-hours. But in order to do that, they had to hand out summary guides for everyone in the movie theater. There was so much that they had to fill in for people who hadn't read the book that you had to have a handout to read, to make sense of the movie. That's kind of what it would be like if you weren't really familiar with the history of Napoleon.

Matt: Sure. Yeah, which is funny you bring that up because my partner has seen the original *Dune* (1984) and read all the books. So even the most recent *Dune* (2021), she's still explaining all the niche things that were missed, and I'm just like “this would be me if we went to see Napoleon together.”

Angelica: I put it in the same category as the Lord of the Rings. This is someone who has created an entire world, and the level of detail of that world is really astounding. It is really a work of art in terms of that world creation. We're getting so off topic. But years ago, when I was an undergraduate, I took a course on the sociology of literature. The question that we were asking was, “Can these genres be great literature? Can a science Fiction novel be great literature? Can a romance

novel be great literature? Can a graphic novel be great literature, just because it doesn't fit into our preconceived notion of literature?"

Matt: So, the question is, "can *Napoleon* (2023) be a romance story and still be great history?" I'll admit, because of the subject matter, I just walked into *Napoleon* (2023), probably with lower expectations, being like, "I'm just gonna take the movie as a work of art as opposed to historical narrative."

It is an interesting thought exercise; however, Anastasia may not have the same interest in the genre of science fiction. Her professional side is not as forgiving. Anastasia tends to speak very quickly when she gets passionate about a subject. Her speech is really picking up now. It is a personality trait that lends energy to any conversation.

Anastasia (she/her): Sure! But I think, even if you evaluate it as art. Like you take that out of it. I didn't find the character of Napoleon compelling at all. I couldn't tell you what the story about him was! I don't think I had a good sense of... When you center a movie on a person, the narrative about that person needs to be complex, which I don't think it was. I think they reduced him down to the shell of the complexity of a human person. And I'm not sure what the actual point was! Like, who was he? What was his purpose? What was his mission? Did he fulfill it? Did he fail? I don't know. I don't think it was a good story, right? I think the story of Maximus and *Gladiator* (2000) is a good story. It's a good popcorn movie. I can watch it in the background as I do dishes and, like spout off "Are you not entertained!", you know, like at the right moment. Because it's a good story. It's like a popcorn movie, right? You can watch it. You're engaged. You're rooting for the main character, right? I was not rooting for Napoleon. Was I

supposed to? Even if it's a movie about a man who falls into Villainy, it wasn't even a good version of that either! It was just like, “what are we doing?”

Lucas: I'll tell you what I did do with it.

Lucas, who has been listening carefully to all sides in this conversation, diverts the conversation back to classroom planning.

Lucas: This is what I often do with my video clips, is I set it up for something else. Part of my role in connection with the University is we have this program where we connect teachers in the US with teachers in Europe. So, my students actually debated with a school in France on the legacies of Napoleon with the French students. This was right after the film came out. So not all my students had seen the film, but they'd all seen clips of the film I showed. We just talked about it in class, right in the middle of our unit, you know, December, January. And then they got to debate with actual French students about the legacy of Napoleon, so that made it incredibly real and relevant to them. That's kind of how we use those clips.

Matt: So, let me recap what you just said, because that just sounds so cool. You had these students who are already talking about the film Napoleon because you showed them clips from it. Maybe a couple had seen it. This led to a discussion of Napoleon's legacy that then bridged over to them debating with French students?

Lucas: Yes. We had just talked about it because, November it came out, and it's November, December, January. You know, between the semesters. Students get where it fits within APEURO content. We were heavily into that unit in class, anyway. I thought, “well, let's have a debate with the French students in January,

when my students are really Napoleon experts." We did that as like a culminating event from this whole Napoleon unit.

Matt: And what was the debate like? Who took what side? Did like, for instance, the American students take a positive view and French take a more negative view, or vice versa? Or how did that work out?

Lucas: Generally, the French have a more positive view, and Americans have a negative view; however, we didn't want it to be a winner or loser debate. We wanted to be collaborative, so we paired the students in mixed US and French groups. My students to work with partners in France and then be on a side - pro Napoleon was a great leader - con Napoleon was a tyrant. But it wasn't France versus the United States. It was a collaboration. Each group has a mixture of students. The winner was the collaboration between the students.

Webster, taking in Lucas' activity, summarizes a final point that hits home with a film like *Napoleon* (2023) and its place in our classrooms.

Webster: In my experience, the students liked *Napoleon* (2023). They knew things that happened in the film that were real. And I think there was a lot of that. When I show movies, the thing I like the most is watching their eyes when they understand. They know what they're looking at. It's just not entertainment like, "oh, I know what's gonna happen next. I know what this relationships is all about. I get the subtle details." And that's what I like the most about those movies and watching the kids. They were all chattering afterwards what they liked, what they didn't like from the historical point of view, which was rewarding to me.

Matt: Sure, that's the best part for us.

As we finish our conversation the group begins to disperse. It is getting late, and we need to be up tomorrow for the Read. I am left contemplating what has been said when Baldwin and Bill enter and sit down. It is not surprising that these 2 would be out, or that they would find me still here, after everyone else had retired for the evening. Seeing the poster for *Napoleon* (2023), they both offer some brief thoughts.

> **Baldwin:** I still have not seen the most recent *Napoleon* (2023) movie. I was just too busy and didn't watch it in theaters, and I haven't gotten around to it, but I've seen some clips online. I think I would probably show excerpts from it. It's so long and Napoleon and his career make up just a short, in the big scheme of things, part of APEURO's curriculum. But I think there's things in there that would be worth probably checking out. Not for next year, of course.
>
> **Matt**: Sure. Yeah, I'll tell you, some of our colleagues have very strong opinions on that film, and I've been very entertained by that.
>
> **Bill:** I had wanted to see it. But I do know that it got kind of blasted by historians.
>
> **Baldwin**: It's not had great reviews. I know the filmmaker has made some really good ones, and he's made some kind of duds, too. That might be one of the duds. I think maybe in class we would just watch parts of it. There's lots of great war movies, but AP does not focus on military history.

As the conversation ended, I reflected on the implications of what had been said. Historical films like *Napoleon* (2023) can be both tools for engaging students in history and subjects for critical analysis. But why the diverging attitudes between otherwise like-minded educators? Why did some like the film, some critique it so harshly, and some disregard it simply because of what others had said? This is something to look out for moving forward with these

conversations. I start us off on our movie game.

Matt: Rupert Everitt was in Napoleon with Joaquin Phoenix

Baldwin: Phoenix was in in *Gladiator* with Djimon Hounsou

Bill: Hounsou was in *Blood Diamond* with Leonardo Di Caprio

Matt: Di Caprio was in *Gangs of New York* with Brendan Gleeson

Baldwin: Gleeson was in *Braveheart* with Mel Gibson

Theme 1 Teachers as Learners

Research Question to Address: How do APEURO readers construct an understanding of historical events from films?

One goal of these interviews was to explore participants' decision-making process for selecting films to use in their classroom. This question - *Could you speak a bit about your decision-making process in terms of using film in the classroom?* (see appendix) - is listed in the interview protocol. I found that if this question came up either too early or too late in the interview session, responses to this inquiry could be tepid and noncommittal. Take these examples.

Matt: Can you talk a bit about your decision-making process for how or why you pick a film or how you have developed your strategies? Like, are there experiences you had as a student that you implemented into your own classroom?

Dale: You know, most of the films I've been using, I've just been using now for so long that I really don't even know the decision process or what made me decide at the time.

Angelica: I don't even know, because I will tell you honestly, I come from an era of film strips where what I saw was, "here's a still picture and we're going to play

a recording". And then "*beep* next still, picture and recording." So, it's not like we watched movies when I was in school. And there were 2 TV stations where I grew up that went off the air at midnight, and I hardly ever went to the movie theater. I was very much a book person, because that was the only option.

Baldwin: I really can't remember too much of that, because I'm so old now. To show a movie in class, like a Hollywood film, involved an actual reel to reel projector, and I'm sure that was hard and expensive and trouble to come by and set up. And so there wasn't too much of that as a high school person. And once you got the college level that just didn't tend to happen in any course that I can remember.

Attempts to address the development of specific strategies when using film likewise invited brief and broad answers.

Matt: Did you learn strategies on the use of film in an education program?

Gale (she/her): I did not learn in any program. I just think that based upon the type of course, and the type of students... It's always something that we're doing within the curriculum, and then I would watch it first and then see if it really fits. So that's kind of how I would try to supplement the classroom with a movie.

To get at the details of how participants viewed film as a tool in their own learning of history and how that learning impacted their classroom practices it became essential to explore specific experiences. The discussions would turn towards learning and development of history and historical narrative strategies, whether these experiences occurred when participants were students or learning on the job. I had to be more direct in questioning participants about their motivations and learning experiences. This section explores those experiences in a two-part

representation of data.

For part 1, Bill and Leopold directly linked their current views on film in the classroom to specific learning experiences from when they were students. While they both credit inspiring professors for their own understanding and analysis of films, there is a stark difference in how they approach this. Whereas Bill had an impactful moment he seeks to recreate for his students, Leopold is of the opinion that advanced learning techniques such as film analysis does not translate to a high school setting. In part 2, Baldwin and Anastasia were also impacted by their education backgrounds; however, their explanation tended to focus more on their professional identity, Anastasia with a background in history and Baldwin with a background in Classics and Literature, rather than from explicit memories from when they were students. In part 3, Dale offers a short, yet powerful story on his experience as a teacher and the impact of students on his learning with film.

Because these are personalized professional experiences, this is an opportunity to dive in deeper with specific participants, their personalities, and experiences as learners; therefore, I have chosen not to represent this data as a conversation, but rather to provide a more traditional discussion vignette. This is in line with narrative data representation described in Reissman (2008) and Willis (2018). The discussion continues mid-week of the Read in the ultra-lounge.

Part 1 – Participant Experiences with History Through Film as Students

Bill – Learning to Love History Through Film

Bill has an electric personality. By that I mean he has a loud teacher voice, a humorous style, and a tendency toward dramatic storytelling. He knows how to hold an audience's attention. I see this in action when Bill is telling jokes to a crowd of readers. There is a particular non-sexual dirty joke that he tells his students at the end of each school year. It’s a high-energy

performative joke that is difficult to replicate without the amount of practice Bill clearly has achieved. He relays that joke to us after-hours in the ultra-lounge. His energy comes through during this retelling of a joke much in the same way his animated nature comes out during our discussion of film. He lights up at the chance to share stores from his classroom. I envision that his talent for adding cinematic flair to any discussion is useful for drawing students into history by presenting them with engaging narratives.

For Bill, film-based historical narratives, much like his own storytelling, are not just representations of the past; rather, they are living demonstrations that foster emplotment in a way that textbooks cannot. Bill credits his college Western Civilizations teacher for igniting his passion for history and for his penchant for using film. During our discussion Bill is animated both when relating his classroom strategies for teaching with film and when discussing his inspiration for his current practices stemming from his experiences in college.

> **Bill:** My very first history class I took in college, the course that made me become a history teacher, was an introduction to Western Civilizations. It was just a basic Western Civ, a huge survey course, right? Big lecture hall at the University. This professor had movie nights. Not everybody went, but on a Thursday night, every 2 or 3 weeks, he would show us a movie. That's where I saw the 1930's version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). That's where I saw *Casablanca* (1942) for the first time. I remember, it was a small group, but after we watched a movie, we'd have a great discussion afterwards. And everything just clicked for me. I'm like, "this is awesome history!" Like, "he knows what he's doing," right? He would say "we read all of this stuff about World War I. You read your textbook, and you listen to my lecture. But now let's actually talk about this movie." And

so, we talked about when it was made. It led to even more discussion than just the content. I just remember the professor saying “all right, let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe. Where are they coming from? Are you picking up on the young guys from Bulgaria. Well, why are they here?” He then linked it back into the Nazis move across Europe. And then something just kinda clicked. It was like, “Okay, yeah, here's this movie. It's the great Humphrey Bogart.” But it's like “Oh, this is this totally could have happened,” right? “This is so realistic! There really could have been a Rick's cafe, and these people really were trying to get out.” And so I remembered that. Then in my class, we watch *Casablanca* (1942), and I tell them "this is because my college professor showed this to me way back in the late 1900s. And so I'm gonna make you all watch it.”

Matt: How do you tend to do this? Do you show a whole thing in a 90-minute session?

Bill: No, I'm always pausing right when I get to certain parts.

I am not surprised by this. In a way that conveys full respect, I cannot imagine Bill sitting still for long enough to let a movie play through without bursting forth in excitement to highlight something important. I picture this as something very effective for making sure students are aware at key moments. Bill mentions that even when he lets movies play, he stands by the screen in anticipation of the next point for discussion.

Bill: And then a lot of times I'll be like, “Okay, that's enough pausing. I'm gonna let the next 45 min run, but these are the things I want you to be on the lookout for,” right? And then we'll let it go. At that point, as a teacher, I just throw that at them saying, “just watch and pick up all these various things?” I'm like, you had

your first rap battle when Laszlo says, “play the Marseillaise” and the German guy wants to sing his German song. I'm like “Guys! “That's where Rap Battle started” And so we'll play up on that thing. I tell the kids all the time “this is a movie you're gonna roll your eyes at the beginning, but at the end tell me you didn't like it.” And I have yet to have a kid tell me, “Oh, yeah, that was terrible.”

Matt: How much do you engage with your students with Casablanca as a primary source? As propaganda?

Bill: Very much! We kind of do the same thing I did back in the day. Like, “let's stop. When was it produced?” Right? “When did Americans see this for the first time? Okay, they're not in the war yet. What do you think,” you know? “We see the premise of the movie? But now, what are some hidden motivations behind this movie?” So absolutely, we use that as a primary source. The other thing that kids come up with all the time is, “Oh, my God, everybody's smoking”, right? It just blows their mind that everybody's smoking! And then we talk about the smoking and the drinking because, I looked up, they were limited on how many times you could actually be seen drinking in a movie. I'll ask kids afterwards, “how many times does Rick have a drink in front of him but doesn't drink it.” And they're like, “Okay, why is that?” Well, there are certain censors that said they couldn't be seen on film drinking. But boy they could all smoke!

Matt: Haha! That's probably in their contract, you know. Make sure you smoke every 10 seconds, or whatever versus the drinking thing.

Bill: Exactly yup. I thought I read somewhere that they're like... I mean, they're clearly in a bar. But it's interesting. You don't see people consume very much.

Right? I think things like that are so interesting.

Our conversation is cut short as Bill's attention is diverted by a new group arriving at the ultra-lounge. They want to hear his joke, and Bill is happy to oblige. With Bill holding court, I take this opportunity to slip out quietly. The night is still young, and Leopold had mentioned he would be out downtown. I will go see if I can find him.

Leopold – Advanced Techniques Do Not Always Translate

I come across Leopold enjoying a quieter scene, hunched over a quaff. Leopold is a stoic intellectual, particularly when compared to a fiery personality like Bill. Leopold is the kind of person to unwind with at the end of a day rather than to get more wound up as is what typically happens at the ultra-lounge. I relate details from my conversation with Bill to Leopold stating that I found Bill's connection to his own experience as a student to be enlightening. Leopold has recently gone back to earn his Ph.D. in Childhood studies, and from this program, he has his own brief story about a passionate professor who used a lot of film to get students talking.

> **Leopold:** I recently had a class called War and the Warrior where we read different war novels and war plays and talked about the theme, and how it changed throughout history. One of the last weeks, instead of reading, the professor gave us time to watch a movie, *Heaven and Earth* (1993). It's the only American movie that I know of that's told from the Vietnam perspective of Independence. It's the same guy who did *Platoon* (1986) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), Oliver Stone. We were looking at the perspective of the war, and then we kind of talked about it. It sort of makes the French and Americans look guilty. They went in there and destroyed everything. I think because of that, it got bad press. Tommy Lee Jones is in it. It is really good. In fact, It's awesome! We

spent a lot of time talking about the different stages of the film. So, like in the beginning, it starts in the late forties, early fifties, and it's before the French came back and took over again. It's just this bucolic farming community and this little girl, her experience, growing up with her parents in this poor farming community. We talked about the colors and how it was blue and majestic and purple, and peaceful and serene. And then the French come in, and they bulldozer over all this stuff, and then the family flees and then finally, some join the Viet Cong because they want to fight back against the French. They push the French out by '65. Then it was just one disaster after another. It's very tragic. Also, the film is very Buddhist in that there's sort of 5 stages to the movie. The idyllic farming community, the Viet Cong arriving, when she goes to Saigon, again when she goes to America, and then she comes back to Vietnam at the end, where she really gets to see how she betrayed her family. Like her brother fought for the Vietcong, and then she marries as American and goes off, and that American was just horrible cause he had PTSD. I mean, it was a good movie. In graduate school everyone watches, and we get involved in pretty engaging conversations.

It is this last line that catches my attention. Is Leopold saying that this type of analysis and active learning is reserved for graduate students? Along with APEURO, I know Leopold also teaches Capstone Research, a course in which students are expected to be independent learners and active in their own academic success. He has told me that he prefers to run his classrooms on a seminar style, guided, independent-learning model for all his courses, preferring to be a facilitator rather than a lecturer. He has also previously mentioned that in APEURO, rather than relying heavily on feature films, he prefers to use literature such as *Candide* (1759), *A*

Tale of Two Cities (1859), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and *The Plague* (1947) as tools for exploring historical narratives through fiction. Most of the films he mentioned before were for his literature or psychology courses rather than APEURO. While he does occasionally integrate films in APEURO, it is typically for comparative or supplementary purposes rather than the basis of course content. I ask if this recent experience in his graduate course has shifted his mindset at all.

Matt: Are these themes that you would ever introduce into your classroom, like that kind of film analysis.

Leopold: If I'm going to do something like that, something else has to be cut. Part of the problem is again, it's time.

This response is likely influenced by two factors. The first is that Leopold has always been very selective, and often wary of using film as he believes that time is better spent with representative literary works. He has stated as much before. The second factor is speculation on my part. Leopold's experience with film as a student came later in his career than it did for Bill and therefore may not have been as formative in developing classroom strategies. In his graduate seminar wherein film analysis played an important role has not shifted Leopold's view that film is simply too time consuming for his APEURO classroom. I find this conversation significant for understanding how Leopold utilizes film for his own understanding of history, even if he does not seek to replicate that process for his students. This is further evidence that Leopold distinguishes between techniques to teach graduate students and appropriate skills-based learning that is necessary for high school students.

Matt: When looking at these literary works or other fictional historical narratives, have students ever said something you hadn't thought of before? Have they ever

come up with some nuance connections, or something like that?

Leopold: There is nothing that I can think of on the top of my head where it's like, “wow! This blew my hair back.”

There is something to be said for not trying to fix what is not broken. Leopold has a good thing going and new professional experiences are not likely to change that. This sounds a lot like Wineburg’s chapter *Peering at History Through Different Lenses* (2001, pp. 139-154) wherein he states, “learning about disciplines is not simply a matter of acquiring new knowledge; it entails examining previously held beliefs.... Such beliefs run deep, and uprooting them may require... a bulldozer” (pp. 152-153). This became even more evident as I continued investigating how participants' educational backgrounds and professional self-identities influenced their teaching philosophies. For now, it is time to say goodnight. It has been a long week already and there is still more to go.

Part 2 – Participant Profession Identities Impacting the Use of Film

This section explores the distinct teaching approaches of two participants, Anastasia and Baldwin, in the context of their roles as educators in APEURO. Both educators use films based on fiction novels as a tool to engage students with historical content; however, their methodologies differ in ways that reflect their unique professional identities and academic training. Anastasia, a historian with a deep grounding in factual analysis, leverages film to provide students with an immersive, historically accurate understanding of war and its human impact. Baldwin, who acknowledged repeatedly during our discussion that his background is in literature and Classics, uses films to explore broader emotional and philosophical themes that represent literary movements like romanticism. This section highlights how each educator’s academic expertise shapes their approach to teaching.

Anastasia - Historical Narratives in APEURO

The next morning, I arrive early to the Read and find Anastasia already there. As usual, she is the first one in the scoring room and she is rereading her well-worn personal copy of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928). I think she does this, because otherwise she would not be able to avoid the temptation to sign in early to the ONE and start backreading her tables, a practice that is discouraged, although not outright blocked, by ETS policy. The only thing that limits Anastasia's boundless productive energy is her strict adherence to professional guidelines. Since we both have some free time before our day begins, I will take this opportunity to get her thoughts on the latest film version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) and its place within the classroom. After some shared comments on the novel, Anastasia started in on the film.

> **Anastasia (she/her):** I had a student one year who wrote about the book *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) because they wanted to do a project with the 1930 film. And I was like, "Oh! that one [1930] is American." I wouldn't let them do it because the original film was American. We're in European history. But last year we watched the German *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) that won the Oscar. If you watch it on Netflix, you can watch it in the original German with subtitles, or you can watch it dubbed.
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> **Matt:** How did the students respond?
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> **Anastasia (she/her):** Generally, what I see is shock! When you read trench warfare was bad, and people's feet fell off, and trenches were nasty to live in, it's really hard to actually visualize what that looks like. To have any sort of concept. And World War I is something that I hit very hard in APEURO. Often the

students have taken American history so the very first way to introduce it is like, "just tell me what you know," since the narrative of World War I in American history is very, very different from the narrative of World War I in European history. I started talking to them about how for Britain and France more people died in World War I than they did in World War II. And so what I'm going to do is I'll really hammer home for you why the interwar period is the age of anxiety. What this war really did. So, I want them to understand that European trauma was different, because it was this sort of, I don't wanna say it's the first modern war, I think you can give that to the Crimean War, but the sort of extent of it, right? The intensity. I think that film really brings it home. Like the kids, a lot of them have seen 1917 (2019), more than had seen the new *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022). And so, like when at the very end of the movie, when the main guy gets shot, the students are like... like the idea of somebody dying at the very end of the war, right? I tell them there were people who died at like 10:59am on the day. I was like "the guns were firing. We have primary sources that talk about the eerie silence. Of being in the middle of a battle and then it's 11am and everything just shuts down." Students are just like, "Oh, that's so weird!" But then, kind of coming full circle and seeing this idea that people died on the last day, or in the last days of the war. We can see the increasing discontent that people had in asking "why are we doing this? And we're just cogs in the machine, right? And we don't really understand how this is serving a purpose." That dichotomy between, especially in Germany, like the upper classes, the military class saying "No! We have to go and win for Germany!" And then the soldiers who are on the

front going like, “are you fucking, kidding me? Why?” Those are the kind of tensions that we can talk about in class, that can’t be represented in textbooks, are much more poignant when they can kind of see what the life of a soldier was like, what life in the trenches was.

Even early in the morning, Anastasia speaks very fast, especially when she gets going on specific topics of history and the historian’s craft. Like Leopold, Anastasia teaches research methods courses along with APEURO. This fits well with her Ph.D. in history from an Ivy League institution and her consistent activity within the academic community beyond the classroom. In discussing Anastasia’s views on scenes from *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), it becomes apparently quickly and consistently that her professional identity is a significant part of her teaching philosophy. Being a historian shapes her classroom practices, including employing film. Anastasia’s goal with film is to aid students in understanding how history feels, stating that even a fictional narrative can still demonstrate historical accuracy such as in the novel and film *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928 and 2022).

The novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928) provides the primary source grounding for a lesson based on a cinematic depiction of historical concepts. Films provide necessary visualization of what Anastasia considers to be accurate and documented experiences found in the novel. And yet, there are shades of our earlier conversation about *Napoleon* (2023). Accuracy is important, but so too is emotion, feeling, and the ability to visualize such a heavy historical topic as warfare. Anastasia’s voice rises and her cadence picks up even more as she continues to describe the scene (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Anastasia: And that general! The one who's standing by the fire at the very end saying "No! we're gonna go fight!” And everybody's in that plaza watching him

give the talk. Students seeing that and hearing the soldiers go. And I'm hearing students being upset at this fictional narrative that's not really all that fictional. Students get it in a way that's more real for them. When you look at a story like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928), which is written by somebody who experienced the war, but is designed to be fictional... When you make that into a movie, I think you want it to be true to the novel, and in large part it was. And so, it was accurate to the narrative, as you understand it, but also, within the accuracies of the time, to the way the war was fought. This feels the way that it should. It feels like it's honoring the story. It's honoring in all the senses, the history itself, but also this narrative of this fictional, semi fictional text.

Matt: Do you ever talk about the production of these films? I think you brought it up a little bit. But do you talk about like, why, all of a sudden, we have all these World War I movies that have come out recently or like. Why *All Quiet on The Western Front* (2022) being produced in Germany is a big deal? Does that ever come up in conversations?

Anastasia (she/her): I actually talk about that with the novel more than the film, right? The idea that *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) as the novel was the German perspective coming to light with all the post-war angst, the Weimar Republic, and what was going on there with the distrust and dissatisfaction with the German Government as it was. I tend to talk about that more with the novel than I do with film to illustrate German acceptance of what happened in World War I and to set up World War II. When we watch *1917* (2019), we talked about the production style. The continuous filming. We talked a bit about that, and what

it took to film that way. But that was more like casual discussion than any sort of analysis of film style or production. Otherwise, we just don't have necessarily the time to be doing that.

Matt: Sure, just my curiosity would be something like, where would this film fit in popular historiography?

Anastasia (she/her): Oh, yeah. I'm not sure my kids are ready to write like that.

Matt: Sure. Yeah.

Baldwin – Literary Narratives in APEURO

Baldwin is a weird guy. I say that with as much love as that statement can muster and assure the reader that this truly is a case of "takes one to know one." One time, at a bar in Kansas City, he spotted two strangers at a table with a mountain of nachos in front of them. After a few minutes, he announced to our group "there's no way they finish all that food. I think I'm going to SWOOP on in have some." He then proceeded to flap his arms like a slow-moving giant bird as he "swooped" over to their table to ask these soon-to-be-new friends if they would be willing to share. It's moments like these that explain why Baldwin is my oldest friend at the Read. We have created several stories over the past 17 Summers, many just as idiosyncratic as this one. I say this here as a means to continue my self-reflection and acknowledge that our personal connection might shade my analyzing his classroom. That said, I assure the reader that Baldwin is as professionally adept as he is goofy. I believe that goofiness plays a role in his appeal to his students.

Baldwin's education background is in literature and Classical languages rather than history or education. As he teaches at a private Catholic school, he was not required to take any professional certification courses to become a teacher. It is not surprising then that many of his

teaching strategies stem from his literature background. Baldwin's goal when using cinematic films is to illustrate broader societal themes rather than pure content. Baldwin describes film as a tool for making stories more relevant to and impactful for modern students. Unlike Anastasia, accuracy in fictional accounts is not as important in Baldwin's use of film as emphasizing the emotional undercurrents of historical periods and drawing connections to larger themes. I catch up with Baldwin during lunch and share with him a few of Anastasia's comments from earlier in the day. I tell Baldwin about Anastasia's take on *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928) as a literary complement to her course that translates well for film. I know Baldwin, with his keen interest and professional training in literature would be interested. He agrees with a lot of what Anastasia said and begins to share some of his own perspectives on using literature to address historical content.

> **Baldwin:** Not that I do all these movies every year since I have to judge who I'm dealing with to a certain extent. There's the Liam Neeson and Geoffrey Rush version of *Les Miserables* (1998). That's a pretty good one. *Count of Monte Cristo* (2002) with Jim Caviezel that came out, maybe, 15-20 years ago. Occasionally we watch the French version of *Cyrano to Bergerac* (1990) with Gerard Depardieu.
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> **Matt:** Let's go down the list here. So, the Count of Monte Cristo. I wanted to start with that one, because I used to show that one all the time. I'm curious what do you do? Do you show that entire film?
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> **Baldwin:** Again. I don't do all of these, because that's too much time taken up. But if that's the one I pick, yeah, we would probably watch the whole thing right around the time of that content. It's about conservative reactions right after the French Revolution, the early 1800s. Napoleon is sort of a background character.

But it's entertaining, and it shows the way people dressed, and people acted. As far as I can tell, Hollywood did a pretty good job on that. During *Les Miserable* (1998), the film shows how Jean Paul Jean transfers ownership of the company, his tile factory, over to the workers, which is kind of a really early form of Socialism. I'll show it when we're talking about that. I try to make these little magical moments happen where it connects with what students are studying at the same time. I mean we talk about how romanticism is sort of all about intuition and emotions, and in both cases, both of those movies *Les Miserable* (1998) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002)], there's a character who's basically obsessed. I compared it to the story of Moby Dick. You know, Captain Ahab was obsessed with catching the White Whale.

I notice Baldwin intentionally over emphasizes the "h" sound in both "white" and "whale". Having my own foibles that students enjoy teasing me about, I picture what his students would make of his exaggerated pronunciations.

Baldwin: I ask students "what do you think each one of these characters represents?" They usually pick up that "Oh, Javert! He's reason..." What's the famous painting by Goya? *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1799). One could become overly rational to the point where you lose your humanity and feeling. Javert is on this one track for 20 years, or most of his life catching someone who is just a bread thief. And again, we have that discussion in class that can lead to something different. I'm sure I highlight Romanticism because I have this literature background. When we get to the romantics, I tend to read poems or some kind of literature, if we have time, from that period. We'll read little snippets

of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798).

In typical Baldwin fashion, his stream of consciousness takes a sudden turn to a new topic that is equally relevant in revealing his narrative style.

Baldwin: I'm not one of these people who likes to go backwards in time. I don't know if you know teachers who do that. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. But, the last couple of years I have done this thing where I start with the rise of Nazi, Germany. There is a documentary done by the History Channel called *The Third Reich: The Rise and Fall* (2010). It's usually available on YouTube. It's done in a very serious way. In class, we're not going to talk about the events which we learn brought Hitler to power, but rather why the German people allowed it to happen. Much of it is tied to this romantic vision of a fictional German past. How did the people who supposedly were the most educated in all of Europe allow this to take place? It's done in a very serious, almost like a horror movie, kind of way. The narrator! I know he does the background or the voiceovers for stuff like this haunted house show on the history channel, which is really scary. So, when he reads it, and they put all this actual black and white footage up there and start talking about it. And the class gets really quiet, you know, as the narrator talks about that. What I'll do is say, “Hitler's rise to power,” and then we'll talk about it. Then, we do that kind of Lord of the Rings thing - “How did it come to this?” Then, we go back to the Renaissance, and I’ll say something like “it all started back in Florence.” Then I'll move forward. Half the reason I do that is just because by the time the end of the year is starting to wind down, you gotta make sure we get to that, and Cold War. So, half the reason is I

make sure it gets done. It's important. So, we'll talk about the rise of fascism. Mussolini and Nazism in Germany.

Matt: So, you basically start the year with the rise of the Third Reich?

Baldwin: Correct. I think it gets their attention in late August, when we're still kinda spaced out. And, suddenly I turn all the lights off, and it gets real serious, real quick, and it gets real quiet, real quick. And again, I suddenly I get their attention. Students are kind of glued to the screen for a while, and then we'll get into the book. And I'll say, here's what you're seeing, and we'll talk about the factual things you need to know about this.

Matt: Do you find this visualization to be valuable? Do your students?

Baldwin: The picture is worth a thousand words and a film is made up of thousands and thousands of pictures. I don't know if that's part of it or not. I have a very good imagination, and a lot of kids do. There's no way to find out what it really looked like, or how this person really behaved. I feel like it's better than nothing or just reading a dry description in a textbook

Dale – A Students Narrative in APEURO

The Read is finally over for the day! There always seems to be a palpable feeling of getting over the hump after day five, especially for those of us in Leadership who arrived six days before the Read even began. Up to that point, day five seems to drag on interminably. Readers swam back to the hotel intermixed with the other subjects that are also here in Kansas City. This year, African American Studies has joined our cohort of readers that already included Computer Science and Psychology. Each day at 5pm, over a thousand readers try to cram into hallways, the cafeteria, and the elevators back to our rooms.

On the walk back amidst the herd, I spot Dale up ahead. I catch up to him so we can chat a bit about the day. Dale may be the friendliest human being I have ever met! I have never seen him without a smile whether he is in class, at the Read, or playing trivia at a local pub. He is one of the few participants I have seen in action in his classroom. He is a legend among his students, so much so that there is a mural of him on the wall near his classroom. Getting a chance to speak with him at the end of day five is a mental salve after an exhausting session of scoring. I had not yet had a chance to speak with Dale on his planning and strategies for using films in his classroom, but during this brief walk back to our respective rooms he shared a story that seemed relevant to my exploration of how and why participants choose the films they do.

> **Dale:** Probably the newest addition to my list of movies is *Bridge of Spies* (2015) that I added, probably about four or five years ago. That was a conscious addition after I watched it and saw the value in showing it to my students. I'm like, "Wow, this is really good." The visual of the Berlin Wall and asking "how does this affect people?" This wall is going up, right? What's going on with the East and the West. We have this vision of Communism that people in Communist countries are locked in. But again, like, I think you know, *Bridges of Spies* (2015) shows there was interaction between East and West, right? We call it the Iron Curtain. It wasn't easy, but there was communication between them. We actually had a student years ago from Poland. His family left in 1988. It is more accurate to say they escaped. The reason they were able to escape is they had grandparents in Austria. So, as they grew up, these two kids, they'd go to Austria to visit their grandparents. But what the Polish Government did to make sure they came back is they would only issue visas for three of the four family members. That's what

they did, and that way they would ensure that the rest were going to come back. And what happened in their case is the government accidentally gave visas for all four. So, they got in the car and left and got refugee status in the United States. After *Bridge of Spies*, I think it helps students understand these kinds of stories a little better.

As Dale and I walk past the hotel lobby we see some of our comrades sitting in loungers. They are dressed up for the symphony and waiting on the rest of their party.

Lucas: Mel Gibson directed *The Passion of the Christ* with Jim Caviezel.

Baldwin: Caviezel was in *The Count of Monte Cristo* with Richard Harris.

Angelica: Harris was in *Cromwell* with Alec Guiness.

Gale: Guiness was in *Lawrence of Arabia* with Peter O'Toole.

Bill: O'Toole was in *Ratatouille* with Ian Holm.

Anastasia: Holm was in *All Quiet on the Western Front* circa 1979.

Theme 2 – Teachers as teachers

Research Question addressed: How do/did APEURO readers understanding of historical events shaped by films impact their teaching practices?

Part 3 – Film for Curriculum Content (16th Century)

One of my favorite films to show in APEURO is the French film *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982).[20] The film, based on a book by historian Natalie Zemon Davis (1982), revolves around a court case from the 16th-century Pyrenees village of Artigat on the border between

[20] Participants mostly referred to the film *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) by the English title *The Return of Martin Guerre*, which is the same as the Natalie Zemon Davis book. I did not correct the transcripts when the English title was used to refer to the French film. I will clarify only when participants are specifically referring to the book.

France and Spain. The story is one of mistaken identity and fraud, focusing on the wealthy peasant Martin Guerre, his wife Bertrande, and Arnauld du Tilh, also known as Pansette. Martin, who abandons his family and the village, returns to his home after 10 years to find that he has been replaced by the imposter, Arnauld. Arnauld serves with Martin in the military, where Martin tells Arnauld all about his life in Artigat. Using this knowledge, Arnauld is able to fool many in Artigat, including Bertrande, into believing that he is Martin returned from the war. Over time, the village splits between those who believe Arnauld is in fact Martin, including Bertrande, and those who believe this new Martin to be an imposter who only seeks to claim Martin's significant inheritance. The result is a series of trials overseen by a local judge, Jean de Coras, wherein Bertrande stands as Arnauld's most staunch defender. Coras is only able to come to a decision when the real Martin arrives, proving Arnauld to be an imposter. The court rules that Bertrande has been the victim of Arnauld's deceit and thus acquits her of adultery. Martin and Bertrande are reunited, and Arnauld is hanged.

Coras' account is the primary source used by Davis to reconstruct the lives of Martin, Bertrande, and Arnauld in her book, which serves as the basis for the 1982 film. The value of this documentation and the reconstructed story, from an academic and historical perspective, lies in its ability to provide a window into the lives of mostly illiterate peasants that might otherwise be lost.[21] From a classroom perspective, the story's value is its capacity for engagement. Just as the case of Martin Guerre was fascinating enough to Coras to inspire him to write down every detail of this dramatic case, I found this compelling narrative useful for inspiring students to care about the lives and experiences of 16th-century peasants.

[21] This type of historical valuation is discussed by Samuel Wineburg in his chapter "On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach Between School and Academy". See, Wineburg, 2001, p. 63-88.

Within the AP European History curriculum, Martin Guerre's peculiar case, while entertaining and historically enlightening, holds less significance than the more broadly impactful and commonly recognizable 16th-century figures, such as Queen Elizabeth I or Martin Luther. For this introduction, I thought it necessary to provide a description of the case of Martin Guerre for the sake of clarity. By contrast, anyone familiar with Western history or American social studies content will likely have at least a basic understanding of the reign of Elizabeth I and the role of Martin Luther in the formation of Protestantism, making a detailed explanation of either figure superfluous.

When considering films as a tool for content-based emplotment for the purpose of preparing for the EOC, showing clips or even the full versions of the films *Elizabeth* (1998), *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007), or *Luther* (2003) would seem more substantive than *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982; Seixas, 2004).[22] This is the perspective expressed by Webster, Gale, and Anastasia. Additionally, Bill and Baldwin both address the significance of *Luther* (2002) in preparing skills for the EOC. *Luther* (2002) is produced by the Lutheran Thriveant Finacial Institution, a banking service expressly for the Lutheran Church. This provides an opportunity to connect authorship and motivation to historical representation as evidenced in this film, a valuable skill for the EOC. There is room for peasants on the EOC when considering broader elements of social or economic changes that occurred during the Reformation (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap23-apc-european-history-leq2-set-1.pdf);

[22] The EOC had a DBQ on Queen Elizabeth in 2011. See, https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap11_frq_european_history.pdf. Martin Luther was a significant part of the Peasants Revolt DBQ in 2008. See, https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap08_euro_history_q1.pdf. It is also assumed that both Elizabeth and Luther will be central figures for most LEQs and SAQs on the Protestant Reformation. See, https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap18-european-history-saq3.pdf as an example.

however, it appears, at least in the minds of students', the significance of a story of mistaken identity in the remote village of Artigat is minimalized. In 18 years of scoring APEURO exams, I have yet to see a student response that references the story of Martin Guerre, Artigat, or even a description of local court systems that were often the sole means of documenting peasant life. None of the participants had seen a direct reference to Martin Guerre either in their classroom essays or as readers for the EOC. And yet, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) provides a narrative that is at once interesting and significant in a way that provides opportunity for an impactful lesson on shaping a historical narrative, even if that lesson does not often translate for the EOC. Tabitha and Dale agree on this point.

Then there is the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003 – hereafter referred to as *Master and Commander*). This is one of my favorite films of all time and is relevant to a significant era in APEURO curriculum; however, I had never found a way to justify using *Master and Commander* (2003) in class. The movie is long, the story is meandering, and the historical topic is too niche to connect to wider themes in APEURO. I find *Master and Commander* enjoyable, but I also believe that showing students a movie just because I like it is bad practice. *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) may not be as directly relevant to the EOC as *Elizabeth* (1998) or *Luther* (2002), but it is easy to connect the story to social, economic, and cultural aspects of Renaissance era French society. A forward thinking and ambitious student could, in theory, utilize these themes effectively on the EOC even without making direct reference to Guerre or Artigat. Any such topics would be a stretch to find in *Master and Commander* (2003). At least, that is what I thought before my conversation with Lucas.

What follows is a two-part discussion on the theme teachers as teachers, centering around specific classrooms strategies for using film to address historical content. Part 1 of this theme

presents data through a constructed conversation between Gale, Dale, Bill, Baldwin, Angelica, Webster, and Tabitha as they address the issue of substantive content and historical emplotment from the films *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982), *Elizabeth* (1998), *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007), and *Luther* (2003). Tabitha is the only participant who uses all four of these films in her classroom; therefore, I have chosen to center Tabitha, rather than myself, in the discussions on teaching content relevant to the EOC. Webster, Gale, Angelica, Bill, and Baldwin address the viability of film for exam preparation by focusing on the value of the films *Elizabeth* (1998), *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007), and *Luther* (2002), whereas Dale and Tabitha advocate their use of *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) as equally impactful. Part 2 breaks from this conversation to exhibit a single discussion between myself and Lucas on the sub-theme of film solely as a tool of engagement and for creating historical empathy, rather than for direct EOC preparation. For this portion, Lucas recounts an engagement activity designed around the film *Master and Commander* (2003).

Tabitha's Story – Preparing for the EOC

I first met Tabitha as a reader at my table about 10 years ago. Not only was she a standout that year in terms of scoring, but it was quickly apparent that she is a natural leader. I recommended her for TL to which she was promoted the following year. The year after that, she moved right past me to be promoted QL, a testament to her work ethic and management skills. Of course, it does not hurt that Tabitha is one of the easiest people to talk to. A big part of the Read is the socialization, and Tabitha fits right in at the ultra-lounge. As is typical even during these social gatherings, it is difficult to avoid shop talk. Tonight, after a weary day five, Tabitha leads the conversation toward my project and the broader theme of film.

Tabitha: Oh, I've always been a film buff! Even when I was an engineer, I loved

history and history films. I did pick up a few good ideas when I was an intern. That's where I came across *Luther* (2003). I had already seen *Elizabeth* (1998) and later I added *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007) when it came out. I particularly like to use those two as visual markers for the students. The Columbian Exhange scene with the potato, the Armada scene, and showing [King] Philips [II of Spain's] religious fervor.

Dale: I actually, in the 1990s, took a class and saw *Elizabeth* (1998) in theaters.

Gale: *Elizabeth* (1998) I find kind of odd for class. Students don't really need to know that much about Elizabeth to take the exam. In terms of focusing on content, everything we're doing is driven toward the exam; however, others might say "this is an area of history that I find interesting. And I want to put into place." That's where I see people focusing more on Elizabeth I.

Tabitha: Well, I mean scores are one measurement, of course, but it leads us to question the benefits for using films in learning history. It would be interesting to know if teachers using *Elizabeth* (1998) in APEURO is influenced by having seen the Elizabeth DBQ from, was it 10 years ago? All of the sudden they're like, "we have to know this."

Gale: Exactly. I wonder how often that comes up. Like, "well, this came on the exam." I mean I also don't believe that everything you do has to be toward the exam either, so I mean you should still do stuff that you know the students can learn.

Baldwin: I know we don't always teach to the test. Well, we all do a little bit. I just think it's the same reason you travel. That's one thing I do at school. We go on

these tours to Italy. It's one thing to talk about the Colosseum, or the Vatican, or whatever it is, but to actually go to Florence and walk the streets and take up the same space that some famous person once did. I think movies are not as good as that in some ways, but in some ways maybe better. And 10 years from now I'm sure that VR goggles will be able to take you there. It's Assassin's Creed man if you want to walk around Renaissance Italy. As for the movie, whether it's accurate or not, it's an experience. But I will not just sit there and watch a movie for 3 days straight. I mean, because I'm always pausing it to kind of like, say, "Oh, do you understand what's going on?" That probably annoys them. But I try to hit the little teachable moments that crop up.

Webster: Yeah. Sometimes, when I know something is inaccurate, I'll use that as the teaching moment. We'll pause and I'll say, "now, you know, what actually happened?" Like at the end of *Elizabeth* (1998), when she is looking over the cliff at the Armada burning and being destroyed by the typhoon. When we get to that, I always pause, and I always ask "Okay, what's wrong with this scene", and almost right away "Well, hey, we're north of Scotland. There's no way around Northern Ireland. There's no way she would have been able to see that".

Tabitha: Sometimes accuracy is a factor, but the visual is more important. That's why the Armada scene from Elizabeth is so impactful.

Baldwin: Exactly! It allows them later to picture it in their head, from some Hollywood film that they watched and say, "oh, yeah, I remember that." I think that's a valuable tool for them. A mnemonic device.

Webster: It's also sort of a check for "do you really remember what was going

on.” With the students we talked about the Babington plot. I teach that before we see it, and when it happens in the movie I'll pause. “What's this called? Babington Plot.” It’s sort of a refresher of what's going on. I usually show that film at the end of one of our units where Elizabeth was covered earlier. It ties all those pieces together.

Dale: I don't really have a problem with the fact that sometimes it is not entirely accurate, right? We read historical fiction so we can watch it. A good example, of course, in European history is *Martin Guerre* (1982). When we're reading about peasants and farming methods, it's pretty dull for most students. They're not really into that. Watching it, though, and being able to discuss it. And even though it's exaggerated, the costumes are not exactly like they were. But the fact that they can see Martin and Bertrande, students find value because they better understand the concept of a wealthy peasant, right? They really don't understand from reading, but they can see it. Wealthy doesn't mean luxurious. These peasants were anything but luxurious. You work from dawn to dusk, even for the wealthiest peasants. But they own land, and the concept of a dowry, views on gender, views towards work, views towards even like something like a simple as wedding ceremonies. I can explain in class. But being able to see these traditions and talk about them. I think that really is important.

Gale: Something I think about whether students are going to engage with a movie. I just think they would be bored by *Martin Guerre* (1982)

Tabitha: I find the kids love *Martin Guerre* (1982)! Especially the whole mystery. It really is a good visual of peasant life. They love it even though it’s

subtitled.

Dale: With *Martin Guerre* (1982), they're groaning when I tell them it's in French and they have to watch subtitles. They're not happy campers initially. And then, you know, when all of a sudden, you see Martin Guerre, the real Martin, coming into the courtroom. Students are all gasping like "Oh, my gosh!" Like they get so into it. They all like the false Martin, of course, because he's played that way.

Baldwin: Gerard. Yeah, Gerard Depardieu.

Dale: For sure. And one of the things, every year this usually comes up, the kids were like, "well, what happened afterwards?" We don't know. There's no more recorded history of what happened with Bertrand and the real Martin. Like we just don't know. That's where the recorded history ends.

Tabitha: It's great when students want to know more! Do you point them to the book? You've read the book, haven't you?

Dale: So, it's interesting. I read the book before I watched the movie. And I like the book. After I watched the movie, and then I reread the book, and I liked it way better. Usually, I like the book way better initially. But I think again the movie helped me. And I think the movie helped me to visualize what was in the book. Very off task here for a minute, but I don't know if you ever watched or read the *Game of Thrones* books. I've read them all. But I'll be honest. I don't know if I could have read them had I not watched the first season to visualize it.

Tabitha: I think a big part of it is because the book is a history book. Whereas the film gets more creative license. That last scene where the Judge is speaking to Bertrande after the trial. He is like "Oh, come on, just between me and you, right!

You knew the whole time." The film really plays out on what [Natalie Zemon] Davis does speculate on yet cannot confirm in any way with the sources.

Dale: Exactly. I like to tell students how it's different in the book. The book, you know, one of the things I read is that they're really guessing that when Bertrand and Martin originally married that they're probably about 10 years old. They didn't consummate their marriage because they were just too young. And so, at first it wasn't a big deal. Then, when they came of age, they still hadn't consummated their marriage... that's when it became a concern. This film doesn't show that, of course. I'll go over some of the differences with students. Like Bertrand never admitted to the judge that she knew that it was a false Martin, right? That's just speculation of course. But the kids really get into it! And it's the first film I show. It sets the tone for the rest of the year.

Bill: The first feature film that we really watch is *Luther* (2003). I think it is Ralph [Joseph] Fiennes, or one of the Fiennes brothers. The kids always recognize [Alfred] Molina, Spiderman Doc Oc or whatever.

Tabitha: My kids really get into is *Luther* (2003)!

Gale: Yeah, I do show a clip of Luther, when he goes to Rome. He's disgusted by everything.

Angelica: I show the scene where Tetzel comes to town, and he's offering indulgences, and he's clearly playing on the fears of these people. There's this scene with the mother who has a crippled child, and even though she's obviously desperately poor, she still gives her money to the church. Then Martin Luther gets angry and nails the 95 theses to the door. Then I show it through the part where

Pope Leo says, “this monk is drunk on his own power”, or something, “sober him” right? And then he's threatened with excommunication.

Bill: What I love about that one is that right from the beginning I say, “Okay, one of the most important things that's going to come from this movie is the opening credits because it leads us into a connection with the DBQ about point of view.” The opening, right before the thunderstorm, Martin Luther is walking on his path. It says “This is a production provided by Thrivent financial,” an institution for Lutherans. And so, it's this Lutheran Insurance Company that paid for this film.

Angelica: You know, and this is terrible, I can't even remember that part. I’m not even sure if I've watched the movie all the way.

Gale: Yeah, that's a good point. Yeah, I've never watched the whole thing. So, I never thought of that.

Baldwin: It pops up in the beginning in big letters, and I like to unplug the thing so students can't see it and then plug it back in and they watch the movie. At the end I will say “so, how did you think the Catholics looked in that movie?” And they basically say “bad”, because they kind of do. And then we watch the credits. And then that shows up. And that's how we talked about DBQ’s. And that used to be one of the big things that you would do on a DBQ is trying to suggest that certain sources are biased. That's still an option on the DBQ. But that was a good way to introduce that maybe because this is paid for in great part by the Lutheran Church, right? A Lutheran affiliated organization is going to make Luther look a little better than he was, and make the Catholics look a little worse. And I asked them if a Catholic foundation made this movie, what would it look like?

Bill: Yeah, right away, I'm already stopping and the students will groan. I say, "Okay, why is it important? This is your DBQ work that's coming up. You've just sourced this." And so we have the conversation. "Can we trust what we're about to watch, knowing that this movie was made about Martin Luther and paid for by Lutherans." And that leads into discussion. We'll spend time on how Leo X is portrayed. How about [Johann] Tetzel? There's great scenes in there where Tetzel is going around selling his indulgences and acting like a used car salesman. And so the kids love it because it's just so well done and dramatic. Then we will watch the scene where Martin Luther refuses to recant. Students see that text in the book. It's the famous quote, you know. "Here I stand. I shall do no other."

Angelica: Oh! I also show that clip. It's the Diet of Worms. He is here defending himself saying "Here I stand. I can do no other", right? I showed that bit, which is probably I don't know 10 minutes or something, and what I hear from the students is always, "can we watch more?"

Bill: Honestly, my kids, just like any question I would ask them about Luther on any exam after that point. They remember it.

Dale: We went with my class several years ago to the movie *Luther* (2003), and we went to dinner afterwards. I had a speaker, a professor in the University history department, come and talked to my students about it. He, in fact, is Lutheran and goes to a Lutheran Church. He didn't bash the movie. But he discussed how the movie exaggerated the Catholics. That was really kind of interesting to get that perspective as well.

Tabitha: I teach in the Deep South, the true buckle of the bible belt. The kids

really feel a sense of pride when we watch *Luther* (2003), and they make it personal.

Baldwin: Do you have any Catholic students who might react differently?

Tabitha: I'm sure I have, but it hasn't really come up.

Baldwin: I work in a Catholic school, and I show *Luther* (2003). Probably one third of the students are not Catholic. I'm not Catholic either. It's interesting how a lot of them... I mean, we are studying the Reformation during that time, and it's interesting how not just the Catholics, but even the Protestants are not always fully aware of what they believe. They go to church, and they know that they go to a Presbyterian church, or they go to a Baptist church, or whatever a Catholic church and oftentimes they'll say "Oh, I didn't really realize. That's what my church believed. I just go and show up". Most of the Catholics know about transubstantiation. But they're interested to learn about what the Catholics do, and the Catholics are interested oftentimes about what the Protestants are doing during their services, and what they believe about the Eucharist and things like that. So, that's actually one of the kids' favorite units, at least in my school, because I think the nature of that school. I actually show Luther every year. That's one that's most consistent for me. That's one of the ways I actually introduce bias is because I will not show them, or I'll skip through the opening credits that says it's produced by the Lutheran something or other foundation.

Tabitha: Have you ever had a student actually write about one of the movies in one of your essays, like in practice?

Baldwin: My students haven't specifically referenced the movie. Not that I can

think of. But it's a way for me to introduce the concept. And usually what we'll do is practice with a DBQ. Maybe, if I've got one, you know, or I can assign one that has something to do with Luther and the Reformation, or just anything. We could do a DBQ about anything. There's always going to be some source that's potentially biased. I tell them that's all you could do is just sort of suggest, if that's the case. You would have done your job.

Bill: Mine do reference the film! Especially if I do an FRQ or something on Luther. I'll see a quote dropped in from the movie. I'll inevitably get "You know that drunken German monk" will be written. I'm like, "Alright, I'll take it you were paying attention."

Baldwin: I think a lot of them... because the kids at my school take theology classes. Whatever you want to call Bible classes. We have theology teachers who are pretty reasonable about it. But I think there have been a couple of times where Luther and some other people have taken a hit in there. I always go down to talk with head of the theology department. I warn him "So, I'm watching Luther. Get ready."

Tabitha: It's a great hook.

Part 4: Lucas's Story - Films for Creative Engagement

It is this last statement by Tabitha that provides a transition to Lucas's short narrative. Here I reinsert myself into this retelling of a specific activity wherein Lucas describes a classroom activity that creates excitement for historical teaching and learning. While the conversation at the ultra-lounge continues, I meet up with Lucas at the hotel bar near the lobby. I have been looking forward to hearing his take on *Master and Commander* (2003) ever since he

mentioned he uses it in class. At first, I struggled to picture how he makes this film relevant. That is, until I recognize that Lucas is thinking much bigger than the EOC. It is evident from this description that Lucas is not teaching towards the exam with this lesson. Rather, the intent is in making an impact through creative teaching strategies surrounding film, particularly when providing a hook for student engagement.

> **Lucas:** Hooks. Yeah, they're hooks. There's a great film. I use it a lot in all my classes when we get to the age of sail, balance of power, and conflicts of the 1700s. But you can use this for the Spanish Armada earlier in stressing the importance of naval warfare and control of the seas in European and world history. This great film, *Master and Commander* (2003) with Russell Crowe. It illustrates what naval combat is like at sea. It really is like a first-person shooter in a sense, right? It's a Hollywood film showing you the perspective of someone on a ship. What is it like when a cannonball hits the side of a wooden ship? Seeing how people get injured, how people react, what the confusion of combat is like. So, I ask students to pretend, for example, that they are an officer on watch. A good thing about this film is again... My students are quite interested to learn that you can be an officer as young as 12 in the Royal Navy. My students are 15 or 16, up to 18. So, you've got these teenage officers in charge of an entire ship. You've got to make a snap decision. So, I pause the film at a couple of points. I'm probably showing this clip for maybe 15 minutes. And I'm pausing at a couple of points. I'm saying, “Okay, you've got to make a decision here. The whole crew is watching. You're the 12-year-old officer. Everyone will die if you make the wrong decision. You've got 5 seconds. What do you do?” Right? To kind of give

the students a feeling of what it's like to be at sea. And the intensity of events like that. So, yeah, they relate really well. It is almost like role-playing experiences. The scene is early in the film, when this is... Unlike their Spanish Armada or these other examples of big naval combat, you know huge fleets of ships. It's just a single ship. French versus British. And you first see the British ship, and it's sailing into a fog bank of South America. I tell the students, “You're the officer on watch, and you have to make the call when you see this mysterious shape and the distance,” right? This young officer has literally just gone on watch early in the morning. It's barely light. And you see this shape. “Was that an enemy ship in the cloud? Was that a dark cloud? Was that an island rock? What do you do?” And the film actually shows the indecision of this officer, and he can't decide what to do. He is thinking “do I wake everyone up and go to battle stations? Do I just ignore it? Do I look a bit longer like?” And everyone's watching for him to make a decision. That's the first focal point where I pause it and ask them, “what would you do here?” I usually talk them out of whatever they decide, or try to show skepticism when they say, “Oh, I saw a ship!” I’ll ask, “Really? Did you really see a ship there?” Like I made them think and doublethink, and maybe unthink themselves. Very few students actually decide to beat to quarters, which is the phrase go to battle stations. Then I play the clip, and then I show actually it was an enemy ship, and they fired in you, and if you didn't beat the quarters, you've just caused everyone in the ship to die, and they're like, “Oh, darn it!” But then, I say “okay, you're not cut out to be an officer. Don't worry. Don't go to Annapolis. You're not cut out to be in the Navy, but you could perhaps be an ordinary sailor.

Be on the gun crew." Then there's another decision point that I give them once the combat has started. "Could you do this?" You want me to explain that step? The second part?

The speed and tone of Lucas's voice rises. He is enjoying this retelling. This could be interpreted as the excitement inherent in explaining this creative activity; however, it feels more like the excitement that comes over teachers as they relive an impactful classroom experience (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Matt: Please do! Yeah!

Lucas: Yeah. So, if you can't make decisions, then you'll, of course, be the one taking the decisions, right? The officers make the orders you follow. The ship you're on, the British ship, is a smaller rating. I have all these posters around the room of British ship ratings. So, I go up and explain. "Look, here's literally what the terms 1st rate, 2nd rate, 3rd rate mean." I explain the different sizes of ships, and I'll drop in some other words that are used in modern English for naval combat.

"So, your ship is a smaller rated ship than the enemy. Your guns can't fire as far. You can't fire back when they're firing. You've got to wait, as your ship slowly drifts towards the enemy ship, knowing that at any moment a cannonball can come through the side of the ship. You're waiting by your gun, which is essentially a giant bomb. You're waiting to fire, but you know it can kill you if something comes through the side of the ship." And of course, in that scene there is a cannonball that explodes right to the side of the ship where the gun crew is waiting, and everyone gets blasted to pieces. There's bodies sprayed around the

deck. And I say, “could you do that? What would happen if you didn't wait by your gun and you panicked, and you ran away and tried to hide?” So I walked them through the choices. “Could you be brave to stand there and take that order and wait by your gun or not?”

Matt: How does that usually play out?

Lucas: Most of them decide that they couldn't, because they see what happens to that first gun crew. And I say, “right, you're at another gun you what would happen if you panicked?” Obviously, what they decide is "I can't. I'm not brave enough. I couldn't do that if I saw someone else getting blown to pieces, I would try and run away”, right? And they're honest when they describe that. And I would say, “Well, what would happen to the ship if everyone ran away from their position.” And then they realized, “Oh, wait a minute. We'd all die.” I kind of talk them through the consequences of decisions like that.

Matt: How long does this whole exercise take? Roughly speaking.

Lucas: Well, I set it up. I gave them context, not of the 1700s, but of the Spanish Armada in 1588. It’s the same type of ship to ship fighting essentially 200 years earlier. Wooden hulled ships with sails and cannonballs. We set it up by giving them various work from the textbook or other work and maps to give context. And then we draw a map and show the root of the English fleet as it's coming out to meet the Spanish fleet. And then we zoom in on that 1st contact out of Plymouth where Drake comes out. We explain that he doesn't go in to meet the Spanish head-on. Rather, he sails around them and fires long range gun shots. This is why often with my students I’ll say “I could tell you about it, or I could

show you a clip about it. What would you like to do?" And then I show them something visual, and then they really understand it. And I say, "Even better. In this particular case, you get to decide what happens in this battle, what you would do as an officer." There's not many times that I do movies that have that, but that is one of the most effective parts of my course. I get them to make decisions for themselves.

Matt: Sure. Yeah, I mean, it sounds so interactive. It sounds much more interactive than most things that I've thought about doing with film in the classroom. I like that. So because this is the 1588 Spanish Armada is this, I assume, early in the course? Is this the 1st film that you show.

Lucas: 1st Hollywood movie, yes.

Matt: Where did you come up with this?

Lucas: Well, the movie came out, I think, in the mid 2000s or something like that. It's been out there like 15 years or more. And I saw it first in the theaters, and I thought, "Wow! I could totally use this scene in my class." As soon as I saw it, I thought, "this is perfect, because the way the characters react, hesitate, the ages of them." They're just the same age as my students. You know just what teachers do, the way we see things. And it could be documents or whatever and clips of things. And we're like, "oh, this would be really useful in my class."

Matt: Okay. So immediately, when you saw this in theaters, you were already strategizing about how to make this interactive project?

Lucas: Exactly.

The next morning, I see Dale again as we are walking toward the Read. I mention my

conversation with Lucas, but there is not enough time to explain the full activity. I found his comment that engagement can at times be at odds with preparation for the EOC to be a summary of my feelings about *Master and Commander* (2003) before my conversation with Lucas.

> **Dale:** It would be interesting to show clips from *Master and Commander* (2003), just for the example of naval warfare. But I also like, when you look at the alignment with the exam, there would be nothing that would really help with the exam. It's such a great movie. I'd enjoy showing students, because it's really engaging. But yeah, exactly what... what exactly are you gonna do here. There's nothing on the exam about sailing techniques, or the military hierarchy, or or, something like that. Yeah... there... there's not like... I thought... I think it's... I mean, I really want to. But I'm like, I just can't really rationalize spending the kind of time. Maybe if I taught a military history class.

Meanwhile, back at the ultra-lounge:

> **Webster:** Ian Holm was in *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* with Cate Blanchett.
>
> **Bill:** Blanchett was in *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007) with Geofrey Rush.
>
> **Angelica:** Rush was in *Elizabeth* (1998) with Joseph Fiennes.
>
> **Baldwin:** Fiennes was in *Luther* (2003) with Alfred Molina.
>
> **Dale:** Molina was in *Spiderman 2* (2004) with Willem Dafoe.
>
> **Gale:** Dafoe was in *Paris, Je'Taime* (2006) with Gerard Depardieu who was in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982).

Theme #3 – Teachers Using Film Responsibly

Research question to address: What beliefs concerning the AP curriculum do APEURO readers

hold that help or hinder their ability to use film in the classroom?

The previous sections explored how participants use film to understand history and how this shapes the potential for using film to enhance student engagement with historical narratives. However, the perceived barriers that limit the use of film in APEURO have been mentioned but not thoroughly addressed. What follows is a two-part exploration of these barriers. The first part presents a series of call-and-response sessions in which participants discuss procedural challenges that limit their use of movies. This section is structured to emphasize the similarities in participants' perspectives. The second part focuses on the ethical and moral concerns associated with using R-rated films that include adult content. Here, participants' viewpoints diverge significantly, with these differences represented through parallel yet distinct conversations about the viability of using films that depict violence or sexual content. This issue becomes particularly significant when considering the moral and ethical implications of using films about the Holocaust.

Part 5 – How Much Time Can I Spend with Film?

The most common concern over using full length cinematic features was time constraints. All participants said that films have some value as a teaching tool, but finding places in which films could be used appropriately was a consistent issue. Take the following examples.

> **Matt:** Okay. So can you talk a little bit about some of the barriers to using film in the classroom.
>
> **Gale (she/her):** Time. Yeah, time. It's kind of hard if you wanted to start something on a Thursday and continue through Monday or the following Wednesday. That's not really how you should watch a film. I kind of have to judge if I can really fit it in, or what's the relevance of it? So even like *They Shall*

Never Grow Old (2018), when I saw that I was like, “Oh, that'd be great!” But then, where am I gonna put it?

Leopold: I mean, I like films, but as I said, it's just a matter of time. It's a matter of what I can actually either squeeze in or cut out. That's really what it comes down to.

Angelica: I show more movies in regular classes than ap classes, because I feel like I have more time and the regular kids are not doing a lot of writing. It just eats up so much time, and an AP Course moves so quickly that I don't feel like I have the time to show an entire movie. You know? I use occasional clips, or I’ll do movie Monday. I give students extra credit for staying after school to watch a movie that is relevant to what we are talking about, because I feel like there is real value in using film.

Anastasia (she/her): Time. Yeah. With films, because they tend to be longer than a class period, they take up too much time. I think also, if my students went home and said “Hey! We watched a film for a week and a half in my Ap Euro class”, parents might have questions. The value of that in comparison to what we need to do in terms of teaching, the skills are less obvious, I think. So, I tend to not show feature length films. When I do use a full-length feature, it's usually as extra credit. I will do something I call AP Movie night. It's extra credit that generally centers around the idea of how film makes real for you what other sources do not?

Baldwin: I want to be sure it's not just taking up time. It's not just taking up space. It's hopefully reinforcing something that we're talking about or doing in class, so they can see as close as possible, or at least in some small measure what

it is we're talking about.

Bill: First and foremost is considering, what am I sacrificing. What am I gonna give up in order to let this play? To give up the time for it, especially in the AP classes, there's always a voice in the back of your head going "Oh, man, you know, should we really be working through a document or something?" So, time is the big constraint.

Lucas: I'd show more in my world history class where we have a bit more of a relaxed schedule, more time. I have to use shorter scenes for APEURO.

Matt: That's a pretty common sentiment.

Time constraints are not limited to the pressure of the AP curriculum. Participants also brought up concerns over students' willingness and capability of engaging with a full-length feature film in ways that are academic and productive. Here are some examples.

Matt: You've talked about the limitations, time, of course. Anything else, you see as kind of a barrier to using film as a teaching tool.

Angelica: I think that students have shorter and shorter attention spans. They generally don't sit through entire movies, right? They don't even sit through entire TV shows anymore. That is kind of going the way of the dodo. The idea of holding someone's interest for 22 min, for a sitcom seems to be gone.

Gale: I think it's a good way to reinforce different ideas and bring in concepts. I mean, students are so visual, you know, in terms of learning. But these movies are too long for them now, since they're not like 15 seconds on TikTok.

Anastasia (she/her): Kids like film, right? It the cinematic stuff that's in theaters. But more historical films, which I find fascinating and engaging, are not

necessarily something that kids like. If I put that on, and I don't give them something to do with it. If I allowed them to have their computers open, I would lose them almost instantaneously to whatever.

Bill: Students are like “I'm gonna try to be on my phone”. But then I just kind of stand up in the front, off to the side, and I just kind of watch their faces, and inevitably they're all looking.

This brings the discussion to the topic of student maturity, a critical factor in participants' decision-making. This consideration emerges in conversations about how participants perceive their APEURO students, particularly in comparison to students in other courses they teach, especially those that are not college-level, such as AP, IB, or dual enrollment.

Matt: Are there any distinctions that you make when showing films to your APEURO versus maybe a standard or an honors course?

Gale (she/her): In AP classes, I use very little film. I sometimes use maybe a clip from a biography that maybe the History Channel did, or some other type of company that does that. In APEURO I really use minimal feature films. I do show a clip of *Luther* (2003). I used to show clips from *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971), but I cut that out. It is different with some of my elective classes. There I use film very frequently. That's in part because the levels are different. And with AP classes, you do have to master the content and the skills before the exam. There's a deadline of what you're supposed to know. Where in some of my elective classes, there's a lot more freedom to pick and choose and craft your own curriculum.

Tabitha: I think my APEURO students can handle mature content better than my

world [history] students. Like, when I show Gandhi, students will get really quiet during scenes like the Amritsar Massacre. I think if they started to laugh, if they got disrespectful, I don't think I would handle that very well. Same with scenes from *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). Like when the bus pulls up to the hotel, and it becomes clear that they are only taking out the Europeans. Like, when students notice that a dog is on the bus, but none of the Rwandan people are allowed to leave.

I notice Tabitha is getting a bit emotional just talking about this. That happens to me all the time when thinking about impactful movie scenes (Cavanaugh, 2016 and Voskresenskaya, 2016).

Tabitha: I'll have students, teenage boys, who will ask "why didn't they just fight?" I'll tell them, "You're young. You have the youthful energy that makes you think you can fight your way out of everything." I also know they don't know what it is like to have a child. Someone you have to protect. There are scenes where characters are paralyzed by the need to protect their children. That gets me every time.

This sounds just like the student's reaction to Primo Levi as described by Wineburg in his chapter *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (2001, pp. 22-24). Much like what Tabitha is describing, Levi explained to Wineburg that these questions come up every time he speaks to an audience: "(1) Why did you not escape? (2) Why did you not rebel? and (3) Why did you not evade capture before they "got to you?" (p. 23). What Tabitha is somewhat out of sync with other participant comments above in that she argues that film is best used with AP students. College equivalent students are more likely to take film exercises seriously. Another

consideration came up with a brief discussion with Webster.

Webster: Total side note, but we had a night school here for years. It was kinda like “last chance. You got kicked out of school, and you're either going to juvie or you're going night school here.” I taught the history course, and they asked me to come up with some creative ideas. So, I actually taught a course called history through cinema.

Matt: Oh, really?

Webster: Yeah. These are kids on the last gasp before they go to jail. And I would start the class with just a 5-minute quick lesson on something, and then I would show them a full-length film. I would pause it every once in a while, and talk about, “okay, this is what this is about history wise. Here's what's going on.” Then we would talk a little bit about when it was made and then they would do some kind of simple writing assignment based on what they learned, or an aspect of the history that they saw on the film, or something like that? So yeah, I did that for a year. It was a pretty cool course.

Matt: Do you remember any specific film that you used or covered.

Webster: Yeah, I actually had them all sitting over there. Hold on one second [gets up to gather DVDs].

Webster: Okay, so, in no particular order we did: *Glory* (1989), *Seabiscuit* (2003), *Iron Jawed Angels* (2004), *The Lost Battalion* (2001), *Enemy at the Gates* (2001), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), and *Blood Diamond* (2006).

Matt: Holy Moly! Those are some hard hitters.

Webster: Yeah, well, these kids are ... I had to get their attention. You know what

I mean? I have a stack of DVDs, and those are ones that I remember showing. There's probably some others in there. But those ones, for sure.

Matt: Yeah, that's, I mean, you will get their attention! *Glory* (1989), *Enemy at the gates* (2001), and *Blood Diamond* (2006). That will get attention for sure.

Webster: I do *Enemy of the Gates* (2001) in AP too right now. I love that scene when they're coming into Stalingrad. We talk about it a little bit, and then they see it, and it's like, "Oh, now I can understand why no one survived."

Webster's statement "I had to get their attention" followed by a list of films with intense violent content leads into another series of potential barriers, considerations from administration, parents, and students. The questions then center around what is allowed according to other classroom stakeholders. Take these examples.

Administration:

Baldwin: I work at a school where my principal is pretty laid back. That's one of the beauties, I think, of teaching at a private school. I have a little more say in what I can do, and what I can get away with. Not that I'm going to show something, you know, terribly raunchy. I still have to be careful. I try to screen everything. I just don't want to have something pop on the screen like "whoa! We can't do that."

Tabitha: My county has rules against any movie that is not G rated. There are things we can show if we get special permission. But I'll sneak in things here and there. Like the first 10 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). It was such a powerful experience when I first saw that in theaters. The movie is so old now that none of my students will get to experience that unless I show it to them.

Students:

Anastasia: With *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), I've had kids who've come back the next day like, “I'm still thinking about that movie. I’m still, I wouldn't say traumatized. But you know, like I'm still really deeply pondering, what I saw, because it struck me to learn about all the people who died and how they died.” Cinema brings that to life in a way that’s pretty gory, you know. I think it really hits for them that World War I was a different kind of war.

Angelica: Ethics were always a strong, central part of my education, and it has long been a concern of mine that I feel like that is missing from education. The kids have to get it from somewhere. They're not going to figure it out on their own, you know? It's important to me. I had a student in art history who told me "oh, I'm still upset about that movie. I mean, that movie really triggered me.” She found the story traumatizing. And frankly, that's kind of the point, you know.

Parents:

Angelica: I feel like I'm vulnerable here. Any random whack-a-doodle parent could destroy my career. So, the minimum I can do is say, “Okay, I'm not going to show R-rated movies.” Sure. Okay. But it's hard to get non-R-rated movies about wars and violence. And that tends to be a lot of what there is in history that is made into a movie. Not to mention, I feel like I can justify violence more easily than sex. And what does that say about our society?

Considerations for all three:

Dale: Our school is a fairly urban school. We have a very, what I would call a fairly progressive population. But we've got a portion of the population in our

county that any R-rated movie, they're just like "it doesn't matter the value of it. It's R-rated they shouldn't watch it." It's like books. Do we ban certain books because they don't get the message we want to give? There is the one really awkward scene when Schindler is having sex. And I hear snickering. But it's important. There's one in Martin Guerre, too, where there's a brief glimpse of nudity which, honestly, is so brief, if you blink your eye, you're going to miss it. I don't cut it out. But I do send home permission slips for both of these. Our County, I think, has a sensible policy that we send permission slips home. There's the idea of grade level and maturity. With the AP kids, I think they have a certain academic maturity that a lot of the other high school kids don't necessarily have yet. I compare this to say a 9th grade, ancient history course. I don't think I would show an R-rated movie to those students.

Part 6 - Teaching the Holocaust with Film

Dale: So, for a while, like the late 90s and early 2000s, our students were in a way... we were overdoing the Holocaust for the 50th anniversary of World War II. I know, like in our school, every course had to have a reference to the Holocaust, and in a way, it was almost too much.

When addressing the ethical (institutional) and moral (personal) considerations of what is appropriate to show students in the APEURO classroom, the topic of the Holocaust warrants special attention (Schatzker, 1980; see also USHMM Guidelines). This section presents perspectives from participants Lucas, Gale, Bill, and Dale on three films: *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *The Pianist* (2002), and *Schindler's List* (1993). These perspectives provide valuable insights into the goals and challenges of discussing a topic that is both essential for historical

understanding and difficult to address without confronting the violent realities of genocide. Educators who choose to engage with this subject through film must carefully navigate the balance between respecting the gravity of the content and avoiding overexposure of students to adult themes.

Life is Beautiful (1997)

> **Matt:** Okay. You brought this up a couple of times. You show no R-rated content whatsoever?
>
> **Lucas:** None. The films that I show that have moments, like executions, are PG-13. Like when they chop the King's Head off in *Cromwell* (1970). It's kind of at a distance, and it's very sanitized. There are deaths in *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971). Rasputin is murdered. The Czar and his family are murdered. But it's done in a PG-13 type way.
>
> **Matt:** Is that your own personal decision? Administration policy? Issues with parents? All the above?
>
> **Lucas:** It's mostly my decision. I don't want to expose students to stuff like that, because they're probably getting too much of it already. Of course, definitely I would get complaints if I did.
>
> **Matt:** Okay. So, tell me about *Life is Beautiful* (1997).
>
> **Lucas:** It's an Italian director and actor. Not only did he win best actor, but best director. Yeah, they won 2 of the 3 main Oscars. He went to Hollywood to pick up his Oscar, and he was so surprised that he won best picture or best director, one of those 2, maybe both those 2. And he's sitting in the middle of the theater several rows back and he can't get out. You could Google this. He actually starts

climbing over the seats of the people in front and doesn't go to the edge of the aisle. He's climbing over the head of Jack Nicholson. He's stumbling forward across the stage, and everyone's laughing. He is a comedian. That is his main job. The first half of the film is a comedy, and it's a very light touch, and you just see only a few hints of antisemitism coming in when the Germans occupy Italy. Then it gets a little bit darker before there's a really abrupt shift. You can tell the film has jumped forward because the first half of the film basically is a man trying to woo this woman to become his wife and he eventually marries her, and they have a child. And then the film fast-forwards like five years where the kid is now like 6 or 7 years old. Now it's right in the middle of World War II. Germany has occupied Italy, so, it's like ‘43 or ‘44. I think it's early 44. And suddenly now Jews are being deported to the gas chambers, and the main characters get deported, and the man must somehow keep up pretenses with his son. It’s totally inaccurate that a father and a son would be in the same part of the same camp, but anyway, somehow he smuggles his son into his part of the camp. He then has to pretend to his son that this is not a death camp, that this is still a fun scout camp. They're doing fun activities. And the son doesn't understand. And he's trying to make it all a joke. Although it sounds bizarre, it actually works quite well. It shows, at one point, the horror of the Holocaust and, at the same time, the humor and bravery of this dad trying to shield the worst parts of it from his son, who doesn't fully understand what's happening. And he's able to do that in some amazing, kind of quite comedic ways. I guess Hollywood recognized that and said, “Look, this isn't a farce. This is actually a really well-made film. We're gonna give the whole

thing, an Oscar."

Matt: How did you decide on using that particular film?

Lucas: I want to do it particularly because it deals with Italian fascism. There are quite a lot of scenes, especially in the first half, about the development and the growth of fascism in Italy as a cultural. There's actually a pretty good bit of nuance to it in distinguishing fascists as different from German Nazis. It gets into that. It's good for that.

The Pianist (2002)

Gale (she/her): Yeah, I have seen *Life Is Beautiful* (2002). That's really good, but I wonder if the kids honestly would get some of it. The main character, he's like pretending, trying to make it fun for the child. It's a really good movie. I just don't know if it's what the students should see first if they've never seen something like *The Pianist* (2002), that's all. I actually would probably show *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008) to students before *Life Is Beautiful* (1997). But I use *The Pianist* (2002).

Matt (To Gale): You show the whole film?

Gale (she/her): Whole film. I did get a permission slip. And they're upper classmen, mostly for electives, or mostly juniors and seniors.

Matt: Yeah, sure. How do students react?

Gale (she/her): When I show *The Pianist* (2002) first, it's interesting because you think when teaching the Holocaust and genocide, there's sort of this implied idea. Still, afterwards, students say they wanted me to warn them. That I should have warned them that the movie was violent. That was one reaction that surprised me,

that I didn't warn them enough. Typically, students react well, particularly if it's a true story. They actually really want to learn more.

Matt (to Bill): Is there any like one time student reacted in a certain way? Does anybody have to leave the room?

Bill: For the Holocaust with my APEURO, we watch *The Pianist* (2002). On that one, and that's a full feature that I show, and I have had students ask to step out on that one. They're like, “I just need take a break”, and I'm like, “yep, yep, just go.” But, with *The Pianist* (2002), that's a Polanski film. I think it was his parents, or maybe even him that actually survived the Warsaw Ghetto. I’ll have a conversation with students about him. Polanski recreated the Warsaw Ghetto. Everybody says, “you nailed it.” You recreated the Warsaw Ghetto almost exactly like it was.” That's the big reason that I show it. It is so realistic. It's fantastic!

Schindler’s List (1993)

Matt (to both Gale and Bill): Sure. Have you ever shown, or have you considered showing *Schindler’s List* (1993)?

Gale (she/her): I have considered showing that. I don't know why I picked *The Pianist* (2002) over that. I just thought the students would respond better. But I never showed *Schindler’s List* (1993) to really gauge their reaction to that.

Bill: I've thought a lot about showing *Schindler's List* (1993), but I never had the courage to pull that one off in school. I just remember watching *Schindler's List* (1993) in the theater when it came out. This was when I was in college. So, I'm a history student in college, and it just ... it was just so ... it was so moving for me. I was like, I don't know if I can ever watch this again. And so, I tell students all the

time that they should watch this movie. I'm not going to show it, but I think it's a movie that everybody should see at least once in their life. To this day I've watched it once. I haven't watched it again.

Matt (to Dale): Okay, I gotta get into Schindler's list. That's another one that I showed on a regular basis. So, thoughts on using that? Student responses? What are you looking for in particular?

Dale: I show *Schindler's List* (1993) with my AP students. I would have probably shown it to my regular kids, but also, I sit there and think that I wouldn't have the tolerance for someone being disrespectful during the movie. I would lose my mind, and I think sometimes in some of the regular classes you might have that disrespect. So that would be a decision maker there.

Matt: I Imagine during *Schindler's List* (1993), some level of disrespect or something from students... I probably would lose it too.

Dale: I'd lose it for sure! I would!

Dale's voice rises as he says this. This sentiment is reflective of Wineburg's (2001, pp. 219-227) chapter *Lost in Words: Moral Ambiguity in the History Classroom* wherein a teacher faces teenage bravado when discussing the Holocaust in comparison with the My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam War (2007, pp.219-226).

Dale: Showing it, I always tell the kids *Schindler's List* (1993) does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was. If it did, it wouldn't have an R-rating, it would have an X-rating, right? Producers couldn't do that. But it still gives students an idea of the horrors of the Holocaust? They can see it, see the effects.

Matt: Have you ever had parents comment or complain about *Schindler's List*

(1993)?

Dale: I think, you know; I'm trying to think how to phrase this. Most of the AP and IB courses... Most of the parents are college educated. So, I think those parents see a certain value in doing this. I hate saying that because I don't think just college educated are the only people who... you know? I think that college educated parents tend to be open to ideas versus other are not. I'm not trying to sound elitist when I say that I don't.... I don't really mean it in that way. I just think that in general educated parents seem to be a little more open to things than some of the other parents who are not. You weigh that out. And that is a tough decision to make. *Schindler's List* (1993) is a great example.

Matt: Are there any specific student responses you can share?

Dale: I began showing *Schindler's List* (1993) to my 9th graders, probably the year it came out. They found it really powerful. That's another one that I actually read the book before the movie and shortly after, I saw two of the Schindler Jews came to the University and spoke. The Schindler Jews are the ones that explained the X-rating reference I gave you earlier. That was something that they explained "even though this [what is shown in the movie] is really bad, this is not really half as bad as what it was." For example, do you know the chicken scene? The scene is where Amon [Goeth] shoots someone. And the little boy steps up and says the guy he shot stole the chicken. Well, after that actually happened, Goeth shot everybody. He killed everyone, right? And so the movie is not showing everything. But for teaching students... Again, they read about this stuff, but they probably gloss over a lot, like the idea that Jews are rounded up. How does that

work? They really don't get that, you know? They don't really understand the difference between a work camp and then later, a death camp, right? Like what is different between Buchenwald versus Auschwitz? They could see a work camp had brutal conditions, right? But Auschwitz is a death camp. It's a killing center. I think, seeing that gives a sense of the storyline.

Dale continues to show his resourcefulness and adaptability in integrating the movie, the book, and primary source accounts into his considerations. The institutional ethics Dale employs for discussing the holocaust as portrayed in *Schindler's List* (1993) converges with his personal morality in this next section.

Dale: I think one of the things that's really compelling about *Schindler's List* (1993) is the personalities. This is probably more sociology, you know? If you look at Oskar Schindler, he's a war profiteer. He used Jewish slave labor and Polish slave labor. He took advantage of people, right? He cheated on his wife. He's a chain smoker. He's a heavy drinker. All these things that society views as bad. Yet his action saved people. I think it's a very sobering statistic to realize that when that movie was made that there were more survivors connected to the Schindler Jews then actual Jews in Poland in 90 or 95. We have this black and white picture, what people should be like. The President should be this way. A virtuous president acts this way. We forget that they're human and that everyone has flaws. And you know, I think *Schindler's List* (1993) shows that. Schindler, who had a lot of flaws, is doing good.

This rationalizes showing the entire movie which contains scenes of sex that are not directly connected to a lesson on the holocaust. This is a bold decision Dale has made for his

classroom. Here he moves on to connect this to a more global view of genocide transcending APEURO.

> **Dale:** The other thing I think about... when you look at the big picture, the question is “what is our responsibility?” Like, what do we do? You were probably in school at the time, but, like the Bosnian stuff in the 1990s. We know about the Srebrenica Massacre. This is going on, and we're doing nothing. It’s very frustrating. What is our responsibility in Rwanda? When do we go in? And that's not an easy question to answer. There's not a right answer. It's not like you... We can't do something for everything. But when do we do something? And when does it become... I talk with my students about the ethical dilemmas from that era. Like when the Allies heard about Auschwitz, should they have bombed it? Well, why didn't we? These are decisions that are not easy to make.

I resonate with Dale’s perspective on showing the entirety of *Schindler’s List* (1993) and find reassurance in his approach. His commitment to fostering a broader moral consciousness in students is compelling, though it carries inherent risks, as highlighted earlier by Lucas. Nonetheless, Dale's insights make it easy to momentarily overlook those concerns, emphasizing the powerful role of film in addressing complex historical and ethical themes. He continues to draw me into his vision by connecting with a specific scene I also made sure to emphasize in my classroom.

> **Dale:** I think one of the other really powerful scenes in *Schindler's List* (1993) that I always stop with my students, is when the women are talking in Plaszow. They're in terrible conditions right there with Goeth. He's awful. They're seeing people dying, starving, and they've heard stories about Auschwitz. And they're

talking about it. They're sitting there in this horrible condition, saying, “No, this can't be true.” Even people who are living in these horrible conditions can't believe that this could be happening. Sometimes we see things very black and white, and there's a lot more to it than just the black and white. Oh! Speaking of which, the black and white focus of that film is incredible! Such a great filmmaking tool! When the old man with the one arm gets shot. Everyone is shocked. But by the time we get to the Ghetto massacre, we see a little girl in the red coat. It’s almost like the audience is becoming a little bit, what's the word? Callous to all the killing. Then you see the red coat. Then at the end, you see the red coat and the bodies being dug up. And it's like “Whoa!” In many ways, you know, we, we become callous to the violence. That moment reminds you of the individuality of it.

Matt: Sure. Yeah, that red coat definitely was, it’s exactly as you described, a great cinematic tool to make that point really hit home. A point I always emphasize when showing that film is how the violence was more informal in the beginning. It was more a a process of ignoring the violence in a lot of ways. Then by the end of the film it, and I think it even has that line “It's no longer old-fashioned Jew hating. It's policy.” So like when the one arm man gets shot, I'll pause it there and I'd ask the students “Well, why didn't anybody do anything?” Students will start talking about the other people in the street, “well they're unarmed. They're scared.” But what about the government, right? So it's like, did the government order these 2 Nazis to shoot that man? And students will kind of figure out like, “oh, the government didn't order this. These guys just did it. And

the government literally doesn't care." I try to emphasize that murder is not policy yet, but the government has no interest in saving this population. So, random acts of violence by soldiers are perfectly fine in this system.

Now I know I have lost my objectivity, because Dale has gotten me talking about my practices. This is supposed to be about his classroom; however, I find his interpretations and rationalizations fall in line with my own prompting me to express consensus. I am then pulled out of this when Dale abruptly brings me back to the realities of classroom ethics and with an unexpected connection to my conversation with Lucas.

Dale: You know, our County, for a period from about, I'm gonna make these years up, but I'm gonna say, from about maybe 2000 to about 2007. We were not allowed to show *Schindler's List* (1993), or any R rated movie ever. Not even an excerpt. I actually got my school board rep to petition to change it. I was at a conference on the Holocaust. And they talked about, you know, schools showing... we were advised to show... What is that movie? The Italian father and his son? Oh, my gosh! I can't think of it right now. But they're in the camp, and he's trying to tell his little boy, this story, and it very much glosses over what's going on with The Holocaust. *Life is Beautiful* (1997)! That was the film! And so based on someone's recommendation I decided to show *Life is Beautiful* (1997). Then, I went to a workshop at the Holocaust Museum, and they said, "don't show that!" They said they would rather show nothing to which I was like "Oh my gosh!" It not that it's a bad movie, but it's not a good educational movie. And I found that really interesting. That was actually what led me to ask our School Board to reevaluate the policy. And I remember them saying at this conference,

> "you're doing your kids a disservice. You're romanticizing The Holocaust by showing films like this because it wasn't like that. That never would have happened." I called my school board rep. I'm like, "Hey! This is embarrassing. We want to be a world class school system," which was our motto at the time, "and I can't show *Schindler's List* (1993)?" He got that changed.
>
> **Matt:** That's wild!

I wonder what Lucas would have to say about Dale's comments concerning *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Life is Beautiful* (1997). What might Dale might say to Bill or Gale about choosing the *Pianist* (2002)? I am reminded that all that has happened previously is inspired by real conversations I had with participants, but these participants are not actually in conversation with each other. This exercise in creating conversations out of individual interviews helps to illustrate common sentiments and themes. It has also left me wishing these participants had been speaking with each other. What would Lucas and Dale think about what each has said about the use of film to teach the Holocaust? This, and similar responses between participants will have to wait for a future project. The prospect is tantalizing and much like any engrossing research project, I am left with the desire to know more. Further exploration of this and other themes continues in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter integrates the findings from Chapter Four with the literature and theories presented in Chapter Two, providing important context based on the narratives constructed throughout the study. I will provide an overview of the three themes regarding the role of mainstream feature films in the APEURO classrooms of participants: *teachers as learners*, *teachers as teachers*, and *teachers using film responsibly*. This will allow for a further exploration and interpretation of participant attitudes and perspectives toward the use of film, highlighting both similarities and differences in professional self-efficacy and consciousness concerning the APEURO curriculum, the EOC, and the development of unique classroom learning cultures.

To deepen this analysis, I draw on Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961), particularly his exploration of how institutions, such as College Board or ETS, control and define knowledge, behavior, and identities. Foucault's critique of how society has historically categorized and treated 'madness' provides a useful framework for understanding the broader implications of how teachers and students engage with film in the classroom. Just as Foucault examines the shifting boundaries between sanity and insanity, this study explores how mainstream feature films can disrupt or reinforce boundaries within the classroom, potentially redefining the roles of teachers, learners, and the very nature of knowledge itself. By situating the findings within Foucault's theories, this chapter will both highlight the diverse ways in which films are employed in the classroom and also critically examine the power dynamics at play in shaping educational practices and the identities of those involved. This is the broad theoretical framework that links professional self-efficacy with cultural landmarks such as feature films.

Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge establishes a baseline for engaging Hayden

White's concept of *metanarratives* and Wineburg's theories of historical thinking. White's exploration of how grand narratives shape our understanding of history and culture can illuminate how films, as powerful cultural artifacts, serve as both reflections and constructs of dominant societal narratives. Just as White argues that historical events are often framed within overarching, sometimes reductive, metanarratives, films in the classroom can reinforce or challenge these narratives by presenting certain perspectives while marginalizing others. This aligns with Foucault's idea that knowledge production is often influenced by structures of power, where those in positions of authority define what is considered truth and who has the right to speak. In the context of the APEURO classrooms, films can serve as a medium through which metanarratives of history, identity, and culture are not only conveyed but also contested.

Wineburg's research on 'unnatural' processes and practices of historical thinking, particularly his emphasis on the need for students to critically engage with sources and question historical representations, provides the lens through which I examine how films might shape or hinder the development of critical thinking in the classroom. Wineburg stresses the importance of students recognizing the constructed nature of historical narratives, encouraging them to question the authenticity and perspective of the sources they encounter. This approach complements Foucault's view of knowledge as fluid and contingent, as well as White's focus on the narrative structures that frame our understanding of the past. In this way, films used in the classroom can be seen not merely as passive reflections of history but as active agents that can either reinforce or disrupt the metanarratives that shape students' understanding of history and society. By blending these theoretical perspectives, this chapter will explore how films in APEURO classrooms can both reflect and challenge the dominant narratives, fostering a more critical and reflective approach to learning.

1. Napoleon (2023) prologue:

Napoleon (2023) emerged consistently in conversations with participants, becoming shorthand for representing the three predominant themes: teachers as learners, teachers as teachers, and teachers using films responsibly. The simplest explanation for this is that *Napoleon* (2023) was the most recent historical epic relevant to the APEURO curriculum. Had this study been conducted the previous year, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), which had already been prominent in many conversations with participants, would likely have been just as prevalent. Similarly, conducting this study in early 2025 might have yielded conversations about the recent release of *Gladiator 2* (2024). The timing itself is one of the best indicators that this study is timely in capturing the reactions of APEURO readers and teachers discussing a historical drama like *Napoleon* (2023), yet immediately obsolete as cinematic culture continues to change and evolve. While the results examining the themes of teachers as learners, teachers as teachers, and teachers using film responsibly may change over time, these themes provide a consistent framework for understanding classroom cultures as they exist in the moment.

Beginning with the theme of teachers as learners, I look first at Webster. He approaches *Napoleon* (2023) as a tool for expanding his understanding of history, or at least for gauging the film's alignment with established historical narratives. Webster entered the theater with tempered expectations, expecting some creative liberties, yet still found depth in certain aspects of the portrayal of Bonaparte's relationships. Webster seeks a balance between expecting historical fidelity and appreciating entertainment; however, he is also in many ways taking the film at face value. Statements such as "The relationship at the end with Josephine getting the visits from Alexander. I didn't know that happened" suggest that Webster is open to gaps in his knowledge, an important first step in historical thinking (Wineburg, 2001). Where he goes from there is

unclear. Will Webster use this recognition to explore the topic of Bonaparte and Josephine's relationship further or is the film evidence enough to where Webster feels that knowledge gap has been filled? It is a point that is worth speculating upon when considering how mainstream films encourage seasoned teachers to continue as lifelong learners. Of course, it is entirely possible that *Napoleon* (2023) was interesting at the moment yet holds little educational weight in terms of Webster's understanding of history. Acknowledging the artistic licenses taken by Ridley Scott and Joaquin Phoenix as occasionally "weird" and "a little bit odd" indicates, that *Napoleon* (2023) becomes an artifact of the era in which it was produced more than it serves as a historical text.

What is more telling is Angelica jumping in to share her tendency to use the "soap opera details" to catch the attention of students. A shallow read might include a gendered response when comparing Anastasia's preference for relationship drama to Lucas' statement that *Napoleon* (2023) is "great for showing battle scenes". Likewise, Webster commented that he knew little of the relationship between Napoleon and Josephine, but he was quick to point out that "it's a Ridley Scott movie" when excusing the over-the-top battle scene involving cannon balls smashing through a frozen lake at Austerlitz. But to reduce participants to a male and female response seems lazy, reductive, and dismissive as an explanation. What is more interesting is to contrast all three, Angelica, Lucas, and Webster who all expressed that the film was engaging and entertaining with Anastasia and Leopold who expressed their dislike of *Napoleon* (2023) because it showed Bonaparte as weak, effeminate, and "controlled by his women."

Both Anastasia and Leopold couched their objections in terms of historical accuracy, yet in the same breath expressed how much they enjoyed the films *Gladiator* (2000) and *Braveheart*

(1995) despite the inaccuracies in those films. The suggestion here is that Anastasia and Leopold will tolerate historical liberties in some cases while critiquing other films that don't align with preconceived images of the subject (Wineburg, 2001). The rationale seems reasonable enough. Films are for entertainment and both Anastasia and Leopold did not find *Napoleon* (2023) entertaining. But why did they find, and continue to find, *Gladiator* (2000) and *Braveheart* (1995) to be entertaining? The answer is in the data.

> **Anastasia:** *Gladiator* (2000) is a good story. It's a good popcorn movie. I can watch it in the background as I do dishes and, like spout off "Are you not entertained!", you know, like at the right moment... You're engaged. You're rooting for the main character, right? I was not rooting for Napoleon. Was I supposed to?

Maximus in *Gladiator* (2001) gives the audience a character to root for because he fits into preconceived notions of a hero, particularly a hyper-masculine hero (Redman, 2021).

> **Anastasia:** There's sort of the 2 narratives in Napoleon, the great general, and the great reformer, depending on how you want to take that narrative right? I don't think they did either version of him justice because there's no sense of him as the sort of statesman at all.

This is buoyed by Leopold's more direct statement.

> **Leopold:** [Bonaparte in this movie] was neurotic and like a wimp. I don't want to curse here, but they make him look like a pussy. That he was sort of controlled by his woman... To me, it was not accurate in so many ways. It just seemed very bizarre.

Bizarre? I find that word compelling when used in this context. Looking back at

Phoenix's career shows this type of bizarre character is his go-to style. What turns off Anastasia and Leopold is that by casting Phoenix, Ridley Scott has turned Bonaparte, a conqueror, into a queer-coded villain (Stevenson, 2022; Piluso, 2023; Kavka, 2021) closer to Phoenix's Commodus in *Gladiator* (2000) or Peter Hanley's Edward II in *Braveheart* (1995). It might work for Phoenix as the villainous titular character in *The Joker* (2019) or as weak a character submissive to strong female leads such as in *To Die For* (1995) or *The Village* (2004), but not for a Napoleon (See, Bell 2020). This stands in opposition to the image of Bonaparte as a military figure more resembling Russell Crowe's Maximus or Mel Gibson's William Wallace (Redman 2021; Tyler, 2013).

What I find telling is that there is ample historical evidence that Bonaparte had a tumultuous relationship with Josephine that could be interpreted as obsessive and like a "soap opera." Napoleon's fetish-like preoccupation with his first wife Josephine has been likened to Romeo and Juliet both in terms of passion and instability (Roberts, 2014). The letters exchanged between Napoleon and Josephine display intense and often contradictory feelings. There is primary evidence that Napoleon wrote "hundreds of pages of emotional rhapsodies to Josephine" (Roberts 2014, p. 103). Whether the overtly sexual nature and jealous rantings within these letters demonstrate obsession is something historians question, but the nature of these letters cannot be dismissed simply to preserve the image of Bonaparte as a masculinized conqueror and statesman. The issue here is whether Napoleon is a masculine icon and if that iconography is at odds with an unstable and obsessive romantic storyline. Ridley Scott seems to think those traits are congruent, an emplotment narrative shared by popular history author Andrew Roberts. Roberts (2014) points out that Bonaparte's letters to Josephine rarely contained anything concerning campaigns, politics, his ambitions, or anything else of substance which suggests that

Napoleon believed Josephine to be frivolous and that she was not to be trusted. He could be wildly passionate in his letters and then return to the cold calculations of military and political matters. Roberts (2014) argues:

> Napoleon was capable of compartmentalizing his life, so that one set of concerns never spilled over into another – probably a necessary attribute for any great statesman, but one he possessed to an extraordinary degree. 'Different subjects and different affairs are arranged in my head as in a cupboard' he once said. 'When I wish to interrupt one train of thought, I shut that drawer and open another. Do I wish to sleep? I simply close all the drawers. (p. 104).

Roberts is describing Bonaparte as a complex figure who could be all the things seen in Scott's portrayal, the obsessive unstable romantic, and the militaristic statesman. If we take Roberts' interpretation as valid, something that is not a forgone conclusion given that Roberts, much like Scott, could be seen as an entertainer more than a historian[23], then it brings into question why both Leopold and Anastasia frame their dissatisfaction with *Napoleon* (2023) in terms of historical they like the idea of Bonaparte as a strong leader and in this way, *Napoleon* (2023) did not deliver? and in this way *Napoleon* (2023) did not deliver?

Worth considering is Anastasia and Leopold's professional self-efficacy. Anastasia and Leopold both have advanced degrees in history. This might explain their reflexive analysis of a historical epic like *Napoleon* (2023) in terms of accuracy over entertainment; however, this seems to be an issue of historical knowledge rather than historical skills. Professional historians will often be the first to admit that their knowledge is specialized and often remote (Wineburg,

[23] Andrew Roberts has published numerous popular histories on marketable topics including Napoleon, King George III, Winston Churchill, and Adolph Hitler. He has been criticized in several reviews, most https://www.the-independent.com/voices/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-the-dark-side-of-andrew-roberts-1765229.html; https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/andrew-roberts-is-the-social-historian-6771398.html; and https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/why-andrew-roberts-wants-us-to-reconsider-king-george-iii. Also see, Lysaght, 2019. There are positive takes as well that are worth considering. See, Bishop 2014.

2001). Anastasia wrote her dissertation on the High-Middle Ages and even though Leopold wrote his master's thesis on the French Revolution, that does not necessarily translate to the reign of Bonaparte or Bonaparte's personal life. Neither may be familiar enough with Bonaparte to be aware of the soap opera-like details; however, if this was the case, then they might be more like Webster in viewing *Napoleon* (2023) as an inroad to previously unknown facts. That would only occur if Anastasia and Leopold 1. interpret the film as a legitimate source of historical knowledge and 2. believe that they have a gap in their knowledge of Bonaparte that would lead them to ask questions about their knowledge rather than make judgments about the source of that knowledge.

Leopold's and Anastasia's statements suggest that they do not view *Napoleon* (2023), a popular cinematic portrayal of Bonaparte, as a worthy historical source; however, they are hyper-aware that this popular cinematic epic will influence others, including their students, perceptions on the historical Bonaparte. In this way, Anastasia and Leopold offer critiques as a means of correcting the historical record. It is also significant that neither questions their existing knowledge of Bonaparte when presented with forms of emplotment that diverge from their vision of Bonaparte as a masculine authoritative leader. Could this vision be partially shaped by the EOC? Bonaparte as a hopeless, obsessive, and unstable romantic may appear in the primary sources, but it does not appear within the APEURO curriculum and is not on the EOC. Spending time discussing Bonaparte's troubled relationship with Josephine will not pay off academically for APEURO students and so an almost 3-hour epic movie would be a waste of classroom time; therefore, it is a waste of time for APEURO teachers to speculate on how they might change their emplotment based on cinematic entertainment. In this way, Leopold and Anastasia, by correcting the film's narrative, are protecting existing narratives championed by College Board.

Another factor that emerges here is the subject matter central in *Napoleon* (2023). Not every participant weighed in on this film; however, *Napoleon* (2023) provides an excellent opportunity to outline the attitudes and perceptions of each participant as demonstrated in collected data. Participants would debate as to whether Bonaparte's relationship status and sexual exploits are worthwhile topics appropriate for high school students. Angelica says salacious topics help with engagement; Gale would respond that the story is too slow to hold students' attention; Dale would use this to demonstrate flawed traits in otherwise revered historical figures; Lucas would say students get too much sex and violence already. Tabitha would probably skip those scenes in favor of the action sequences; Webster seems ready to actively explore his knowledge gaps alongside his students, but through a cinematic source that Leopold and Anastasia say is inaccurate. Bill and Baldwin, at least at the time of these interviews, avoided *Napoleon* (2023) because they heard historians did not like it; yet, both think they may get around watching it and then decide what works for their students. This is only one film under consideration. Further projects might dive this deep into every film mentioned by participants, but for now discussion of *Napoleon* (2023) merely sets the tone for further exploration and analysis of our themes.

Theme #1 Teachers as Learners

I had several experiences as a student that would influence me later in my preference for film in the classroom. These included my high school psychology class, an undergraduate English course with the title Writing About Westerns, another undergraduate course The History of India Through Film, and a graduate history course on World War II propaganda films. In all cases, film was central to the teaching strategies, and often the course content. Many of my classroom strategies and practices, and at times my decision-making process for selecting films,

connect with specific memories from when I was a student. This led me to explore the experiences of participants to determine if they had similar memories that connected to their attitude using film to teach APEURO. It was fortuitous that my first overall interview was with Bill, someone equally enthusiastic about the impact of film on his learning. I felt validated by Bill's description of his undergraduate Western Civilization course and the impact of his professor leading discussions following *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and *Casablanca* (1942). Much like my own positive memories associated with film as a tool for learning history, among other social studies and literary content, Bill explained his passion for learning and teaching history had started with film. Statements like, "And everything just clicked for me. I'm like, 'this is awesome history!' Like, 'he [Bill's professor] knows what he's doing,' right?" illustrate how Bill sees himself and his place as a teacher.

Bill uses film to recreate impactful moments from his education, aiming to convey the emotional and intellectual connection he once felt. Bill's recollection of experiencing *Casablanca* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* in his introductory college history class informs his approach to film, where he strives to make historical moments "click" for his students. His goal is to inspire similar realizations, conveying the realism and stakes of historical events. This approach demonstrates Bill's formative educational experiences that shape his pedagogical strategies, particularly in film selection. I was excited by the prospect of finding further connections with other participants seeking to recreate impactful experiences they had within their classrooms (Molebash, 2004).

As much as Bill relating his experiences invigorated me in the early stages of these interviews, Gale and Leopold were a reality-check in their rational and, at times, skeptical view on film in APEURO. Leopold, for example, discussed at length his experience in his graduate

course wherein film served as a medium for analyzing psychological and cultural dimensions of the Vietnam War for independence, yet he was insistent that time limitations prevent him from engaging his students in the sort of in-depth discussions involving film that he had enjoyed in graduate school. This is a practice best reserved for a course that did not have a looming EOC dictating pace. Gale was even more adamant that film was not conducive or appropriate for an AP-level course despite her preference for using film in other courses such as psychology, sociology, and Holocaust and Genocide. When employing film in other, non-AP, courses, Gale can be very aggressive in her film selection. During our discussion, Gale brought up films such as *American History X* (1998), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), and *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011). Gale describes these films as impactful for building empathy and presenting students with complex sociological, psychological, and political dilemmas.

> **Gale:** I think, depending on the class, it can provide empathy. It can be a good visual reinforcement. It can expand students, ideas of maybe a topic or content, and get them thinking differently about it. I mean, I think there are a lot of advantages... [But not for AP]. That's in part because the levels are different. And with AP classes, you do have to sort of master the content and the skills before the exam. There's a deadline of what you're supposed to know [versus] some of my elective classes [where] there's a lot more freedom to pick and choose and craft your curriculum.

Leopold and Gale agree that movies can be an effective teaching tool; however, it is clear that they do not hold the same nostalgic connection to a cinematic learning experience that Bill does. As discussed briefly in Chapter 4, Leopold encountered an inspiring film-based learning process much later in his educational career than Bill but also did not have the same excitement

at the prospect of putting on a show for his students. Likewise, Gale spoke about how she learned strategies for using film after she started teaching, mostly through trial and error. She states outright "I did not learn [to use film] any program." The distinctions that emerge between Bill Leopold and Gale regarding their view toward film in APEURO are at least partially connected to their own learning experiences but are also a product of personality differences that impact approaches to teaching. Whereas Bill subscribes to the perspective that teaching is a performance art (McClaren, 2006), Leopold and Gale are more subdued in their approach to teaching, at least in terms of APEURO. I see this as tied to their professional efficacy and evaluation of whether or not mainstream films are legitimate tools for learning history. If the participants believe they are, then movies have a place in APEURO. If not, then movies are appropriate for others, but not for AP students and not for APEURO. This conclusion is further validated when exploring the professional perspectives of Anastasia and Baldwin on the role of movies in the APEURO curriculum.

Anastasia, in contrast to most participants, identifies herself as a historian who educates rather than as an educator of history. In our discussion, Anastasia used some version of the phrase "as a historian" six times to preface a point she was making. This does not include the introductory comments about her educational background. It is this conscientiousness and self-conscious, professional awareness that makes Anastasia's interview ideal for analyzing professional self-efficacy and its impact on teaching practices that utilize mainstream movies. Anastasia is the more explicit version of similar patterns that emerged with Webster, Bill, Leopold, and Gale who all have history degrees, along with Lucas who has a BA in political science, and Tabitha who specializes in history education. Like Anastasia, these participants tended to be more literal in their approach to historical emplotment taken from films. Of this

group, only Anastasia has a Ph.D. in history, and only Anastasia justified her stance as coming from the perspective of a historian rather than a history educator. Moreover, she expects her students to think like historians, as seen in the following excerpt when discussing strategies for watching *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) with students:

> **Anastasia:** [Discussions] generally center around the idea of how the film makes real for you which other sources do not. And then with World War I, this sort of powerfulness of seeing what trenches look like, right? How did it inform your practice *as a historian* [emphasis added] or your understanding? How did it, you know, bring things to life? And so we talk usually about that. And then, you know, like any historical inaccuracies or things that struck you as sort of like licenses of the medium.

The phrase "as a historian" centers around the desire to recognize and thus achieve accuracy in historical emplotment. Webster, Gale, Bill, Leopold, and Tabitha all exhibit this perspective during their interviews; however, Anastasia is the most direct and consistent in highlighting a film's faithfulness to historical facts and the impact of visualizing historical suffering. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), although fictional, is rooted in the real wartime experiences of the author and, therefore, is a worthwhile primary source. The film serves as an emplotment device when students express shock at the soldiers dying in the last moments of the war. Anastasia emphasizes that her students were surprised by these moments, demonstrating the film's success in imparting a historical truth about the First World War. In this way, cinematic emplotment achieves an acceptable level of historical accuracy that helps students grasp the physical and emotional realities that are difficult to comprehend through textbooks alone.

Anastasia emphasizes and almost fetishizes history, historical accuracy, and following historical practices in her interpretation of films. Anastasia's narrative is marked by a pursuit of objectivity, where the historical truths of war—such as the conditions in the trenches, the unpredictability of death, and the disillusionment of soldiers—are presented to students to make the past feel real and immediate. She acknowledges the role of fiction in portraying these truths but always ties the story back to factual historical events.

In a manner related, yet distinct from Anastasia's historian identity, Baldwin consistently reiterated during our discussion that literature and literary analysis are the lynchpin of his identity as an educator. Some form of the word "literature" or "literary" appears 15 separate times in Baldwin's transcript all concerning his view on mainstream movies. Whereas Anastasia chose the film version of the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Remarque, 1928) for its loyalty to historical accuracy, Baldwin uses films such as *Les Miserables* (1997) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002) to analyze the emotional and psychological aspects of the historical eras rather than specific experiences. While the films may have historical elements, Baldwin focuses more on character motivation, moral dilemmas, and thematic symbolism. Anastasia sees films as a medium for engaging with historical individuals shaped by overwhelming historical forces such as World War I. For Baldwin, films serve as literary texts that enable discussions about human nature, social justice, and individual transformation that transcend historical eras. Baldwin does not use film to enhance historical emplotment, but rather as artistic interpretations of human emotions and philosophical ideas. This is evident when Baldwin compares the stories of *Les Miserables* (1997) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002), stories only loosely taking place within historical settings relevant to the EOC, to pure symbolic novels like *Moby Dick* (1851), poems like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), and paintings like Goya's *The Sleep*

of Reason Produces Monsters (1799). It might also explain how his mind works in terms of making references to *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (2001-2003) when discussing the rise of Nazism in Germany. Angelica made a similar comparison when likening *Napoleon* (2023) to *Dune* (1984) much like Dale connected his learning experiences with *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) to the *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019).

Baldwin and Anastasia are the most direct in terms of consciously wording their interview responses around their professional identities. Anastasia is concerned with presenting factual historical narratives based on real human experiences. Media serves as a tool to deepen understanding of the past. Baldwin focuses more on literary narratives that demonstrate symbolic and emotional exploration. Movies are used to illustrate philosophical themes, moral conflicts, and human nature. Both methods use film as a powerful tool, one grounded in historical realism and the other in literary and emotional truth. These distinctions are evident in all participants to some degree. In Anastasia's historian camp Webster, Bill, Leopold, Lucas, Gale, and Tabitha. Baldwin's literary mindset parallels Dale and Anastasia. There is no absolute that can be drawn in how educational backgrounds and professional training explain differences in how teachers approach film as a historical source. Moreover, professional personas are under a microscope during formal interviews concerning classroom practices. What is important is that the data suggests an interesting avenue for future exploration as we continue to peer into history through our individual lenses (Wineburg, 2001).

Theme #2 Teachers as Teachers

My own experience showing *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) in APEURO was consistently positive. I, along with Tabitha and Dale, found students could be hesitant about a subtitled film, not to mention *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* is an older, low-budget, foreign film

without all the bells and whistles of a Hollywood blockbuster. Yet, Dale, Tabith, and I each recall stories of students hooked on the dramatic and intriguing court case involving 16th-century French peasants of no distinguishable historical significance within the APEURO curriculum. Compare this to the star-studded, meticulously crafted, cinematically stunning *Elizabeth* (1998) as well as the special-effects-heavy *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007) depicting one of APEURO's most central political and religious figures. My hunch is that because the historical story of the English royal Queen Elizabeth I is more recognizable than the humble Pyrenees countryside and the Guerre family, teachers are more likely to let the films *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007) speak for themselves. A teacher employing *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) must be vigilant, engaged, and continuously pointing out to students the larger significance of smaller moments in the narrative. Perhaps this is what makes *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) so appealing to active and energetic teachers like Dale and Tabitha.

And yet, Webster is no less attentive and engaged with his students when planning for discussions of Hollywood representations of curriculum content, such as the Babington Plot, or when addressing cinematic creative license such as Cate Blanchett's Queen Elizabeth personally witnessing the burning of the Spanish Armada. Likewise, the film *Luther* (2003) provides a predictable story performed by big-name actors such as Joseph Fiennes and Alfred Molina. *Luther* (2003), like *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007), is a movie that lends itself to lazy teaching practices wherein an unmotivated teacher has students watch the movie and follows up the conclusion with "See? That's what happened." Instead, Bill and Baldwin explicitly selected *Luther* (2003) because it provides opportunities for active teaching strategies that engage with questions of authorship and historical bias.

Finally, there is Lucas's choice to include *Master and Commander* (2003). As I stated in Chapter 4, this is a film I thoroughly enjoyed, and yet I had not found an effective way to justify using it in APEURO given its seemingly niche content. This perspective was echoed by Dale when he stated:

> **Dale:** It would be interesting to show clips from *Master and Commander* (2003), just for the example of naval warfare. But, when you look at the alignment with the exam, there would be nothing that would really help with the exam. It's such a great movie. I'd enjoy showing students because it's really engaging. But, what exactly are you gonna do here?

During the member-checking process, each participant was sent Chapter 4 data representation to ensure they were accurately represented in the narrative. Upon seeing Dale's comment in Chapter 4, Lucas took the initiative to respond.

> If this fictional conversation with Dale was interactive I would directly issue a rejoinder to his remark. Two responses would be:
>
> 1) Technological and Scientific Innovation is one of the 7 themes of AP Euro, so a huge part of the course can see military science front and center. Naval technologies and navies are mentioned in the Age of Exploration, Balance of Power, and each reference to colonies and empire includes them, not to mention transatlantic and other global trade, merchant class, etc...
>
> 2) Spending 20 minutes or so in an engagement activity that students can use as outside evidence, or core evidence in any SAQ, LEQ, or DBQ in the areas above is not a waste of time. Apart from a direct relationship to the course though, increasing engagement, interest, and relatability as the characters are their age, are core to engagement. Anything that adds to engagement increases 'buy-in' to the course and introduces nuance and interesting depth to the course that we reinforce periodically with post-holing (small in-depth dives into the small West Indies island, of St Eustacius's role in the global war of American Revolution, cholera in the Industrial Revolution, virtual tour of Meuse-Argonne in WW1, etc..). These fascinate the students so that they go above and beyond and want to own the course. Ultimately, those students do even better on the EOC exam.

That Lucas took the time to issue a rejoinder says a few things to me. First, Lucas is extremely

knowledgeable of the EOC and its impact on the curriculum. Second, despite Lucas's extensive knowledge of the EOC, he does not want to validate the notion that the EOC dictates his classroom practices in which students learn to actively engage with history. Third, questioning classroom practices, in this case, film selection, becomes almost a personal affront that requires a response. Lucas was able to effectively explain his reasoning in a way that convinced me (Stoddard, 2010), but not Dale since they were not actually in conversation. More significant is that this tells me the conversation on the use of film and film selection for APEURO teachers is ongoing, active, and deeply personal. Each participant and their practices come into focus through this process of self-efficacy and self-assessment in comparison to their peers. Examples of each participant's perspective on the role of film in their teaching are as follows:

Tabitha understands her students better than they understand themselves: Tabitha enjoys showing films in her class, especially *Le Retour de Martin Guerre (1982)* and *Luther (2003)*. Her use of *Le Retour de Marin Guerre* (1982) is rooted in its visual representation of peasant life and the complexities of identity, which she finds engaging for students despite initial resistance due to subtitles. She also finds Luther's struggles depicted in *Luther* (2003) personally resonant for students in her Bible Belt classroom, as it helps them explore religious themes relevant to their lives.

Gale remains skeptical: Gale initially questions whether *Elizabeth* (1998) holds much value due to the limited relevance to the EOC. Moreover, students may not have the attention span for a film such as *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982). Still, an impactful moment from *Luther* (2003), Martin Luther appearing more often on the EOC than most subjects in the 16th century, or short clips from documentaries can provide visual reinforcement to course content.

Webster addresses cinematic inaccuracy: Webster uses inaccuracies in films as teachable

moments, pausing scenes in *Elizabeth* (1998) to correct the historical record. He finds that inaccuracies become an interactive way to test students' understanding of events, using the Babington Plot as a refresher, and emphasizes how visually powerful moments serve to recap curricular content.

Baldwin emphasizes experiential learning: Baldwin compares films to travel experiences that allow students to walk the streets of historical settings. He uses scenes from *Luther* (2003) to discuss bias, noting that the film's Lutheran funding influences its portrayal of characters. He believes this leads to valuable discussions on source bias, a skill critical for DBQs.

Bill blends engagement with source bias: Bill specifically addresses how *Luther* (2003) ties into discussions on bias, helping students consider how the film's portrayal of Catholics versus Lutherans might be shaped by the producer's background. He sets up conversations about source trustworthiness, using Luther's defiant "Here I Stand" speech to emphasize commitment to beliefs and historical agency.

Angelica selects impactful clips for thematic emphasis: Angelica uses the scene in *Luther* (2003) that depicts indulgences and the Diet of Worms speech as impactful clips that distill the tension and values of the Reformation. These specific scenes allow her to bring out themes of corruption, religious conviction, and individual agency, which resonate with students and encourage them to connect emotionally to the historical narrative.

Lucas demonstrates that thoughtful planning never ends: Lucas put a lot of thought and practice into utilizing *Master and Commander* (2003). This planning began the moment he saw this film in theaters. Like many experienced teachers, our classroom becomes our culture. Sharing the enjoyment of exploring historical narratives in the film is much more than an engagement tactic. It is an exciting opportunity to create community and spread the cultural curriculum that bonds

teacher and student in the process of active learning.

These summaries outline the use of historical films in APEURO classes as more than a method of delivering content. Movies, in the hands of experienced and motivated educators, become tools for engaging students in historical empathy, critical thinking, and source analysis, aligning well with APEURO's educational goals and exam preparations.

Theme # 3 Teacher's Using Films Responsibly

Participant concerns with time constraints involved with using full-length feature films are often expressed in ways that emphasize their responsibility as educators to maintain rigor in their curriculum. All participants agree that films can be valuable as teaching tools; however, opinions diverge on the measure of that value in the classroom. Some assert that mainstream movies are integral in demonstrating specific learning objectives, while others argue that films interrupt more traditional, skills-based instruction. Consequently, differing viewpoints lead participants to employ film-based strategies in significantly different ways. Those participants that believe movies are a worthwhile use of time tend to show full-length films, will pause films repeatedly to highlight key moments, and organize long discussions as a follow-up exercise to the viewing experience. Those who are more reticent focus more on short clips of movies or do not show films in class at all, preferring to host extra credit sessions or movie nights outside of the classroom.

Participant concerns over time constraints in APEURO are not particularly surprising. What I find more interesting is the distinction participants made between their APEURO classroom and other courses they teach. Reasons for these distinctions often mention that the AP curriculum is too demanding to allow time to show movies; however, there are also several points wherein participants attributed their decision-making process to the perceived academic

maturity of their students. For example, Gale and Anastasia are the most reticent to use film in their AP courses. Both stated that they would be doing their students a disservice by taking time away from more traditional content instruction. Bill echoed this sentiment when he said: "there's always a voice in the back of your head going 'Oh, man, you know, should we really be working through a document or something'"; although Bill is anything but hesitant when it comes to using film in his classroom. Anastasia and Gale do hesitate, especially when they bring up the EOC. Even when they explain that film is effective for visual-based emplotment, the skills developed from film interpretation are difficult to measure on the EOC compared to reading through primary documents or direct writing practice. As with many themes under consideration, the theme of teachers using film responsibly within the constraints of a looming EOC as expressed by Anastasia and Gale leaves me with more questions than answers. Do Anastasia and Gale see film as a legitimate form of historical discourse, or do they see cinema as something extraneous? Would they hold the same perspective if they were teaching an undergraduate or graduate level history course, something that might change Leopold's perspective, or are they more likely to show films to entertain and engage students enrolled in courses where college credit is not under consideration?

Tabitha, Dale, and Baldwin fall on the side of AP students getting more out of films than their standard-level students. Moreover, both Dale and Tabitha expressed concern that non-AP students were more likely to say something disrespectful or inappropriate during films with serious topics such as the Holocaust. Dale stated "I'd lose it for sure! I would!" about the prospect of a student making an inappropriate comment during *Schindler's List* (1993). With Tabitha and Dale, the film is treated as a legitimate and even advanced form of content engagement. This links back to previous discussions on Tabitha's and Dale's background as

movie lovers, something also explicitly stated by Baldwin, Bill, and Webster. Webster specifically is fairly balanced in selecting films for his AP courses as well as standard, honors, and night classes. The only distinction might be the level of engagement with students after showing a film. Webster also is mostly unconcerned about violent R-rated content in the films he shows, listing *Blood Diamond* (2006), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), and *Enemy at the Gates* (2001) as part of the curriculum for his night class. "I had to get their attention" was his rationale to which I responded "Yeah! That will get their attention alright!" Similarly, Gale listed *American History X* (1998) and *We Have to Talk About Kevin* (2011), films that depict violence as well as graphic sexuality, as movies shown in their entirety in her sociology course. Dale might express concerns that non-AP students would struggle to respond with academic maturity to such adult content; however, he also agreed that sexual content should not be excluded as he does not skip past those scenes in *Schindler's List* (1993) or the brief nudity in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982).

A factor of consideration is how decisions to show these movies and the graphic scenes are impacted by school or county policies as well as parental involvement. Dale says he is "an insurance guy" in that he always gets permission slips ahead of time, a policy likewise explained by Gale and Angelica during our discussions. Baldwin and Anastasia teach at private schools where policy is much more informal and dependent on relationships with individual administrators more than district policies. Permission slips in a private school may not be required; however, parental objections are still points of consideration. Baldwin makes his own decision to avoid awkward moments. "I don't ever want to have a situation where something pops up that's like 'Oops! Can't show that!'". The other side of this consideration is Tabitha who openly states that her county has relatively strict policies against R-rated content, and yet she will "sneak in things here and there. Like the first 10 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)." That

seems a bit bold and almost defiant to county and school policies; however, this is exactly what I did when I taught. Only once did I use permission slips and I rarely followed policies when it came to seeking permission from my administration to show films. What could be interpreted as an admission of guilt from Tabitha turned into a validation for me for my questionable practices as an APEURO teacher. Ignoring administrative directives may be unethical in terms of strict adherence to policy, but it is one that many teachers can rationalize using moral considerations for the greater responsibility of a teacher (Wise, 2006; DeMitchell, 2007). This perspective is voiced by Angelica when she states:

> **Angelica:** I think that one of my functions, whether people acknowledge it or not, is to try to instill some sort of ethics and morality. I think that is a role of educators. I like to show people making hard moral decisions. Because I think that we live in a selfish society, I want students to see that there is something that is bigger than themselves.

This is best demonstrated when participants discussed their use of mainstream movies to depict the Holocaust, a staple of the APEURO curriculum. Issues of policy ethics and efficacy seem to be of less concern to participants than personal morality when engaging with topics as emotionally taxing as the Holocaust. Even the EOC has yet to have an SAQ, LEQ, or DBQ topic that directly addresses the Holocaust as the College Board does not want to force students into discussing such weighty content.[3] Tabitha, Dale, Lucas, and Bill address policies and personal limitations for teaching the Holocaust with explicit films like *Schindler's List* (1993) and *The Pianist* (2002) versus *Life is Beautiful* (1997). Tabitha ignores policies that limit violent content within her district while Dale actively fought via his school board to have the policy changed. On the other hand, Lucas and Bill make personal choices not to show overtly violent films. Lucas

explains that his decision is not tied to policy when he states: “It's mostly my decision. I don't want to expose students to stuff like that, because they're probably getting too much of it already.” Bill’s decision is simply personal in that he found *Schindler’s List* (1993) to be too emotionally taxing for himself as a learner for him to use it now as a teacher.

I used *Schindler’s List* (1993) in my APEURO course. Looking back on that experience, I am forced to reflect on Lucas’ and Bill’s explanations. In particular, Lucas makes such a convincing case not to show such overtly violent films that I find myself questioning previous decisions. There is a fine line between creating historical empathy (Conner, 2023) by strategically deploying shocking content and fetishizing violence and violent content.[4] It is beyond the purpose of this study to make assessments or further judge choices made by participants on the best way to approach content with their students. Instead, this fictional back-and-forth between Lucas, Dale, Tabitha, and Bill highlights the most important point taken from this data which is the cultural curriculum of individual classrooms. Each participant integrates their education, historical perspectives, career experience, attitudes toward films, institutional ethics, and moral judgments into the process of creating a unique classroom culture that only exists between each teacher and the students that are sitting in front of them. That dynamics change drastically each year with new students bringing new personalities, the release of new films, and, as demonstrated by Lucas’s rejoinder, comments by other participants, colleagues, and researchers. The act of participating in this study has led participants to reflect and possibly change their attitudes and practices. This is the best demonstration of the constructed identities that make this research at once exciting and impactful, and yet almost immediately outdated as participants and their classrooms evolve. This is the essence of a post-structural constructivist narrative that seeks only to capture a moment in time (Dewey, 2018). With this, it is worth

examining the limitations and opportunities for further research that come out of this study.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

The most relevant limitations of this study are in three specific areas. First, maintaining a narrow focus on APEURO limits commentary on the role of film within broader social studies. Second, participants are drawn from a narrow demographic group in terms of age, race, education, and experience, limiting the applicability of the findings across a diverse educational field. Third, interview-based data collection is limited to participants' self-efficacy and reflexivity, which demonstrates a disposition toward the use of mainstream movies but not demonstrable classroom practices. The data collected is valuable and interesting; however, this is only a first step toward understanding the role and impact of cinema in social studies classrooms. Each of these limitations serves as a roadmap outlining the next steps in the research process.

By limiting my focus to APEURO, I was able to more effectively isolate experiences and themes; however, this also limited my analysis of usable data. All participants teach or have taught courses beyond APEURO. During these interviews, participants mentioned films they use in APUSH, AP WORLD, both the AP and non-AP versions of Geography and Psychology, non-AP history courses, Sociology, non-AP African American history, literature courses, and film studies. For this work, I have left out most of this data except when it was relevant to comparing strategies for using film in APEURO. Follow-up analysis will make substantive use of the remaining data as the basis for specific explorations of the use of film in the wider social studies curriculum.

Limiting my analysis to APEURO also inherently limited the diversity of my pool of participants to APEURO readers. All participants are White educators teaching a historically White curriculum. It was outside the scope of this project to profile student demographics;

however, APEURO has historically served a majority White student population (citation). This makes the prospect of extending this research project to the emerging AP-AFAM all the more tantalizing. While there have historically been few persons of color in the APEURO Read, it would be worthwhile to extend this preliminary study to include persons of color who teach and/or have participated in the Read for APEURO to determine the extent race identity might influence the use of film within the APEURO curriculum. Not only do participants represent a limited racial spectrum, but they are also all very experienced teachers, limiting the applicability of this data to new and young teachers. The group average for years taught is 24.6 years. The least experienced educators, Tabitha and Anastasia, have taught at the secondary level for 18 years, while the most experienced, Dale and Webster, have taught for 32 years. This helps explain their attachment to feature films, as well as their preference for older films such as *Zulu* (1964), *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982), and *Schindler's List* (1993). Even when integrating new films such as *Bridge of Spies* (2015), *They Shall Never Grow Old* (2018), or the latest iteration of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), the evaluation and integration of these movies is coming from the perspective of extensive experience and knowledge of the EOC. Future data collection would extend this project beyond participants in the Read to include new APEURO teachers who are not yet eligible to be readers due to insufficient experience. Expanding the curricular focus to social studies beyond APEURO and AP in general, as well as broadening participation to those who are not White educators over the age of 35 with 18 years or more of experience in the classroom, widens the opportunities for generalizations about the use of film in social studies classrooms.

Data collection through self-reporting interview-based methods is an important step for establishing classroom narratives of educators. The next step would be to employ more detailed,

phenomenological methods. The intention would be to dive deeper into specific classroom practices involving film in APEURO for each participant. A future study might include classroom observations and the collection of classroom artifacts, such as response worksheets or practice APEURO essays written after a film activity, to further assess teacher practices. Perceptions of the use of film would benefit from interviews with other classroom stakeholders, including parents, administrators, and—most significantly—students. Historical learning from films might be assessed through *thinking like a historian* activities (Wineburg, 2001), such as those demonstrated in the Lexington Green project (Jay, 2021), but with film rather than written primary documents and images. A less formal research study—though no less impactful for narrative understanding—might involve participants watching historical films together and having a conversation about their place within the classroom, much like the constructed conversations that form the data representation in Chapter 4. All of these methods provide guidelines for developing future research projects.

For future directions and developments with this data, I will provide detailed analytical descriptions of each film listed, along with how I would use them in APEURO or other AP History courses. While I made brief comments in Chapter 4, I intended to keep my personal opinions and experiences with specific films largely absent from this work. A potential next step would be to develop a pedagogical guide, a resource for teachers that outlines each of these films, highlights specific scenes, and links them to curricular content and skills relevant to learning and teaching social studies. These interviews suggest a need and a desire for such a resource, particularly one that can address disagreements, diverse perspectives, and barriers to using film. More important than a curricular guide, however, would be a consistent exploration of cinematic, mainstream, feature films as a mechanism for creating unique learning moments

that establish an emplotment-based cultural curriculum relevant to individual classrooms.

The process of data collection and the prospect of extending it with these participants raise another limitation, perhaps the most significant: my personal and professional connection to these participants undoubtedly impacted the results. Staying within the subject of APEURO or expanding to other social studies courses might yield very different discussions if the recruitment process had not been targeted. Recruitment could be modified by using a participant list for the APEURO reading, or any other AP subject, provided by ETS, with random selection based on numbers. From the interview or research questions, I could integrate quantitative methods by creating a survey distributed to anonymous participants. This mixed-methods approach would add breadth to the depth achieved through focused qualitative data collection. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this study was that each interview felt like catching up with old friends. This dynamic lent itself well to the constructed conversation format of data representation. A more traditional thematic analysis would be more appropriate when interviewing readers or other teachers with whom I do not have a prior relationship or knowledge of their classroom.

Conclusion

By blending Foucault's theories of power and knowledge, Hayden White's concept of metanarratives, and Sam Wineburg's emphasis on historical thinking, the data collected in this study provides a rich understanding of how films reflect and challenge dominant historical narratives. Additionally, this exploration is further enriched by incorporating post-structural constructivism, which emphasizes the fluid and subjective nature of knowledge construction. Post-structural constructivism, much like Foucault's view of knowledge as contingent and socially constructed, suggests that meaning is not fixed but continually negotiated through interactions and experiences. Films in the classroom, therefore, can serve as sites of dynamic learning where students actively construct their understanding of history and culture, questioning and reinterpreting narratives as they engage with cinematic portrayals of the past.

The films utilized within the APEURO classrooms of these ten participants are not passive representations of history but active sources through which students engage in the process of constructing knowledge as outlined by Dewey's pragmatism and experiential learning in the classroom. Dewey's focus on learning through experience aligns with the idea that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the process, not merely absorbing information but interacting with it, reflecting upon it, and applying it to real-world contexts. Films, as part of a broader experiential curriculum, can serve as a tool for fostering this type of active, reflective learning. Dewey's pragmatism also emphasizes the importance of problem-solving and critical inquiry, which aligns with Wineburg's call for students to question the constructed nature of historical narratives. By encouraging students to critically engage with films, participants cultivate a classroom environment that fosters inquiry, reflection, and active participation in the construction of knowledge.

The data underscores the importance of using films to shape both teachers' and students' historical consciousness, critical thinking skills, and broader cultural awareness. The fusion of post-structural constructivism and Dewey's pragmatism highlights the significance of students' active role in shaping their learning, with films providing a rich, multifaceted medium for this process. As cinematic culture continues to evolve, so too will the role of films in shaping educational practices, ensuring that this exploration remains both timely and relevant in the context of ever-changing classroom dynamics. By combining these theoretical frameworks, we can examine how films influence the construction of knowledge as well as emphasize the dynamic, experiential nature of engaging in the cultural discourse of history.

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Appendices

Initial Interview Questions

Interviews will be conducted in semi-structured format. The following questions provide guidelines for the conversation; however, it is anticipated that each interview will explore specific topics or stories brought up by the interviewee.

1. Let's start with some background information.
    a. What is your educational background (degrees, certifications, etc.)
    b. How long have you been an educator?
    c. How long have you been at your current institution?
    d. What are some of the classes you have taught, either this or in previous years?
    e. What are the classes you taught during the 2023/2024 school year?
2. What do you think about the APEURO course and exam as it is now?
3. What are some of your experiences with film for...
    a. Learning history?
    b. Teaching history?
4. What are some of the films you use in your courses? This can include
    a. Full length feature films
    b. Clips
    c. Trailers
    d. Primary source clips
5. What do you think about these films as a teaching tool?
6. How have your students responded to these films?

7. Could you speak a bit about your decision-making process in terms of using film in the classroom?
    a. What are some of the benefits of using film for...
        i. You as a teacher
        ii. Your students
    b. What are some of the barriers to using film as a teaching tool (Time, administrative, age-appropriateness, AP curriculum, etc.)?
8. You identified a specific film.
    a. Can you tell me about your decision-making process for selecting that film to show in class?
    b. Are there distinctions between films you show in APEURO and other courses you teach?
9. Have you worked with or are you familiar with the Capstone Program?
    a. Do you think APEURO could work on the Capstone model?
    b. Would shifting to a Capstone model impact your practices of using film?
10. Would you be willing to do a follow up interview once I've reviewed the transcripts?

Follow Up Interview Protocol

A list of films collected from participants will be put into an Excel spreadsheet designated as films identified for APEURO and films mentioned for other classes. This spreadsheet will be distributed to each participant before these follow-up interviews. Films will be listed alphabetically with no participant names attached. Participants will be asked their thoughts on any films listed they had not discussed during the initial interview. This interview will begin with

the caveat that this is a purely theoretical exercise. This means that time, administrative restrictions, and other similar barriers are not a factor in considering the following questions.

1. Are there any films on this list you would consider integrating into your course?
2. What are some strategies you would come up with for using some of these films?
3. Are there specific clips from these films you would find particularly useful?
4. Are there any films listed here that you find surprising, or think are bad choices to use in APEURO?

Sample Coding of Transcripts

Webster:

- In-vivo Code: "I was surprised at some of the depth of the pieces of the research they did."
    - This reflects surprise and unexpected depth in research.
- In-vivo Code: "I thought there would not be much that was accurate, but there were little pieces and nuances that I was surprised at."
    - This reflects expectations vs. reality and accuracy.
- In-vivo Code: "It was more Josephine than I had anticipated."
    - This shows unexpected portrayal and character representation.

Leopold:

- In-vivo Code: "They made him look neurotic and like a wimp."
    - This is an expression of emotion and characterization (neurotic and weak).
- In-vivo Code: "It just seemed very bizarre."
    - This refers to a discrepancy or strangeness in the portrayal of the character.

Webster (continued):

- In-vivo Code: "The kids were all chattering...what they liked, what they didn't like from the historical point of view."
    - This reflects student interaction and engagement with the material.

Lucas:

- In-vivo Code: "It illustrates what naval combat is like at sea."
    - This is an explanation of the realism and visualization in teaching.
- In-vivo Code: "What is it like when a cannonball hits the side of a wooden ship?"
    - This code reflects historical detail and sensory experience.
- In-vivo Code: "You've got these teenage officers in charge of an entire ship."
    - This shows age difference and leadership in historical contexts.

Dale:

- In-vivo Code: "Schindler's List does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was."
    - This reflects sensory limitation in the portrayal of tragic events.

Bill:

- In-vivo Code: "I just remember the professor saying... let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe."
    - This is a teaching moment focused on contextual understanding of characters.
- In-vivo Code: "Everything just clicked for me."
    - This is an expression of emotional connection to history.

Once in-vivo codes are identified, they can be grouped into broader axial codes to help categorize concepts that are more abstract and align with the research questions. The result was the following axial codes:

Historical Learning (Purple):

- In-vivo Codes:
  - "I thought there would not be much that was accurate, but there were little pieces and nuances that I was surprised at."
  - "It was more Josephine than I had anticipated."
  - "Schindler's List does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was."
  - "I just remember the professor saying... let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe."
- Explanation: These codes reflect learning about history, accuracy, unexpected portrayals, and the emotional impact of historical films. The experiences described show how history is learned or portrayed in films and lectures.

2. **Emotion (Red):**
   - In-vivo Codes:
     - "They made him look neurotic and like a wimp."
     - "It just seemed very bizarre."
     - "Everything just clicked for me."
   - Explanation: These statements capture emotional responses to the portrayal of characters, the experience of learning history, or the emotional connection with the subject matter.
3. **Teaching Strategies (Blue):**
   - In-vivo Codes:
     - "Schindler's List does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was."
     - "I always tell the kids..."
     - "Let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe."

- Explanation: These are direct statements about how the teacher structures lessons, provides context, and frames discussions, particularly in the use of films for teaching.

4. **Curriculum (Green):**
    - In-vivo Codes:
        - "It illustrates what naval combat is like at sea."
        - "What is it like when a cannonball hits the side of a wooden ship?"
    - Explanation: These reflect how specific content is introduced, such as how naval combat is shown in films to provide historical context for a curriculum.
5. **Student Engagement (Yellow):**
    - In-vivo Codes:
        - "The kids were all chattering...what they liked, what they didn't like from the historical point of view."
        - "You've got these teenage officers in charge of an entire ship."
        - "Everything just clicked for me."
    - Explanation: These in-vivo codes show how students are engaged in the material, whether by discussing what they like or how they relate to historical figures (teenage officers) and the emotional connection to content.

Axial Codes:

Webster: I was surprised at some of the depth of the pieces of the research they did. I thought there was more accuracy than I would have expected. I thought there would not be much that was accurate, but there were little pieces and nuances that I was surprised at. I know a lot of people were really disappointed with it. I went in thinking it was gonna be pretty terrible and not cover a good story. And I thought it did okay. I just thought it was weird, like his affect, and everything was a little bit odd, like how he carried himself! And it was more Josephine than I had anticipated. **(Historical learning – coded Purple)**

Leopold*:* Well, I mean they made him look like he was neurotic and like a wimp. I don't want to curse here, but they make him look like a pussy. That he was sort of controlled by his woman. I don't know if it was just, what's his name?

Matt: Phoenix?
Leopold: Yeah, I don't know if it was just the way he played it. He just did not... To me it was not accurate in so many ways. It just seemed very bizarre. **(Emotion – Coded red)**

Webster: That's what I like the most about those movies is watching the kids. They were all chattering afterwards what they liked, what they didn't like from the historical point of view, which was rewarding to me. **(Student engagement – Coded yellow)**

Lucas: Hooks. Yeah, they're hooks **(Student engagement – Coded yellow)**. There's a great film. I use it a lot in all my classes when we get to the age of sail, balance of power, and conflicts of the 1700s. But you can use this for the Spanish Armada earlier in stressing the importance of naval warfare and control of the seas in European and world history **(Coded green)**. This great film, *Master and Commander* (2003) with Russell Crowe. It illustrates what naval combat is like at sea. It really is like a first-person shooter in a sense, right? It's a Hollywood film showing you the perspective of someone on a ship. What is it like when a cannonball hits the side of a wooden ship? Seeing how people get injured, how people react, what the confusion of combat is like. So, I ask students to pretend, for example, that they are an officer on watch. A good thing about this film is again... My students are quite interested to learn that you can be an officer as young as 12 in the Royal Navy. My students are 15 or 16, up to 18. So, you've got these teenage officers in charge of an entire ship. You've got to make a snap decision. So, I pause the film at a couple of points. I'm probably showing this clip for maybe 15 minutes. And I'm pausing at a couple of points. I'm saying, "Okay, you've got to make a decision here. The whole crew is watching. You're the 12-year-old officer. Everyone will die if you make the wrong decision. You've got 5 seconds. What do you do?" Right? To kind of give the students a feeling of what it's like to be at sea. And the intensity of events like that. So, yeah, they relate really well. **(Student engagement, curriculum, and teaching strategies – Coded yellow, green, and blue)**

Lucas: If this fictional conversation with Dale was interactive I would directly issue a rejoinder to his remark. Two responses would be:

1) Technological and Scientific Innovation is one of the 7 themes of AP Euro, so a huge part of the course can see military science front and center. Naval technologies and navies are mentioned in the Age of Exploration, Balance of Power, and each reference to colonies and empire includes them, not to mention transatlantic and other global trade, merchant class, etc...

2) Spending 20 minutes or so in an engagement activity that students can use as outside evidence, or core evidence in any SAQ, LEQ, or DBQ in the areas above is not a waste of time. Apart from a direct relationship to the course though, increasing engagement, interest, and relatability as the characters are their age, are core to engagement. Anything that adds to engagement increases 'buy-in' to the course and introduces nuance and interesting depth to the course that we reinforce periodically with post-holing (small in-depth dives into the small West Indies island, of St Eustacius's role in the global war of American Revolution, cholera in the Industrial Revolution, virtual tour of Meuse-Argonne in WW1, etc..). These fascinate the students so that they go above and beyond and want to own the course. Ultimately, those students do even better on the EOC exam. **(Moments of emotion in addressing curriculum and student engagement – Coded**

red, yellow, and green)

Dale: Showing it, I always tell the kids Schindler's List (1993) does not show the Holocaust as bad as it was. If it did, it wouldn't have an R-rating, it would have an X-rating, right? Producers couldn't do that. But it still gives students an idea of the horrors of the Holocaust? They can see it, see the effects. I saw two of the Schindler Jews came to the University and spoke. The Schindler Jews are the ones that explained the X-rating reference I gave you earlier. That was something that they explained "even though this [what is shown in the movie] is really bad, this is not really half as bad as what it was." **(Teaching strategies based on learning – Coded blue and purple)**

Bill: My very first history class I took in college, the course that made me become a history teacher, was an introduction to Western Civilizations. It was just a basic Western Civ, a huge survey course, right? Big lecture hall at the University. This professor had movie nights. Not everybody went, but on a Thursday night, every 2 or 3 weeks, he would show us a movie. That's where I saw the 1930's version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). That's where I saw *Casablanca* (1942) for the first time. I remember, it was a small group, but after we watched a movie, we'd have a great discussion afterwards. And everything just clicked for me. I'm like, "this is awesome history!" Like, "he knows what he's doing," right? He would say "we read all of this stuff about World War I. You read your textbook, and you listen to my lecture. But now let's actually talk about this movie." And so, we talked about when it was made. It led to even more discussion than just the content. I just remember the professor saying "all right, let's really talk about all the different people that are in Rick's cafe. Where are they coming from? Are you picking up on the young guys from Bulgaria. Well, why are they here?" He then linked it back into the Nazis move across Europe. And then something just kinda clicked. It was like, "Okay, yeah, here's this movie. It's the great Humphrey Bogart." But it's like "Oh, this is this totally could have happened," right? "This is so realistic! There really could have been a Rick's cafe, and these people really were trying to get out. And so I remembered that. Then in my class, we watch *Casablanca* (1942), and I tell them "this is because my college professor showed this to me way back in the late 1900s. And so I'm gonna make you all watch it." **(Learning expressed through emotion to form teaching strategies – Coded purple, red, and blue)**

Vita

Dennis “Matt” Stevenson was born in Orlando, Florida. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Florida in 2003 and a Master of Arts in History from the University of Florida in 2004. Prior to beginning his Ph.D. studies, he taught Advanced Placement World History, European History, and Capstone Seminar at Edgewater High School in Orlando, Florida. Matt began his graduate studies in 2022 at the University of Tennessee in Theory and Practice in Teacher Education with a focus on secondary social studies and qualitative research methods. He has taught a variety of courses at the University of Tennessee, including social studies education and film-based teaching methodologies, while also supervising teacher candidates in the field. Matt will graduate with a Ph.D. in Theory and Practice in Teacher Education, focusing on Secondary Social Studies Education and Qualitative Research Methods, in May 2025.