

More biographical films

To give you more options for your work with the Film page (p. 89) in Topic 4, here are three additional biographical films, or 'biopics', featuring three very interesting people.

All of you could watch *Gorillas in the mist* and then one of these films. Or, a quarter of the class could watch one of the four films (including *Gorillas*) and report back to the whole class. However you choose to work with these films and/or *Gorillas*, explain how each of the people tried to make a difference.



Henry Fonda as Abraham Lincoln in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939)

Young Mr. Lincoln, directed by John Ford and starring Henry Fonda, tells an episode from the life of Abraham Lincoln who later became the perhaps greatest president of the United States. Lincoln, a young lawyer in Illinois, defends two brothers who are accused of murder. He proves that they are innocent and finds the real murderer. It is a sentimental film, as films in the 1930s often were. And even if not every detail is historically accurate, Lincoln's greatness – his search for truth, his love of humanity, and his understanding of human suffering – still comes across very well. Some critics have called *Young Mr. Lincoln* a beautiful film.



Peter O'Toole Thomas Edward Lawrence in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)

Lawrence of Arabia, directed by David Lean and starring Peter O'Toole, tells the exciting story of Thomas Edward Lawrence in the Arab revolt against the Turks during World War I. Colonel Lawrence helps his Arab friends organize their struggle against Turkish domination, developing what would now be called *guerrilla warfare*. The film shows lots of exciting battle scenes and portrays Lawrence as he actually was: a character torn between loyalties to Great Britain and to his Arab friends, who, he knows, will not become independent after the war ends. He knows the French and British will divide up the Arab lands between themselves, and that is what happened after 1918.



Liam Neeson as Oskar Schindler in *Schindler's List* (1993)

Schindler's List, directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Liam Neeson and Ben Kingsley, is a hard film to watch. It tells the story of a German war profiteer, Oskar Schindler in Poland, between 1939 and 1945. He is a Nazi party member and comes to Poland to make a big profit in the war during Nazi occupation. He organizes his own factory there. Eventually, however, he realizes the nightmarish crimes the Nazi regime is heavily involved in, in particular the horrors the SS are inflicting upon the Jews. He bribes high SS officers and manages to save 1,100 Jews working for him in his factory – men, women and children. He needs all the profits he makes to pay for the bribes to save 'his' Jews.