BRITFILMS #9 – Accompanying material for media education

THE IMITATION GAME
USA 2014, 110 min.

German certification: minimum age 12
recommended for 14 years and older
Language: English/English with German subtitles

Director	Morten Tyldum
Script	Graham Moore, based on the novel by Andrew Hodges
Cinematography	Oscar Faura
Editing	William Goldenberg
Music	Alexandre Desplat
Cast	Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley, Matthew Goode, Mark Strong, Rory Kinnear and others

About THE IMITATION GAME
When the Second World War breaks out, the shy and brilliant mathematician Alan Turing starts working at the Government Code and Cypher School. He and his small team are given the almost impossible task of cracking the German Enigma code. This seemingly unbreakable code changes every day. Despite opposition expressed by his own colleagues and superiors, he is able to design a machine to decipher the code with the help of the mathematician Joan Clarke. In fact, the team soon sees its first success. Yet it comes with a moral dilemma since the team knows it cannot act on every decoded message or the Germans will realise the code is broken. Moreover, Turing's homosexuality is used against him since homosexuality was still a criminal offense in Britain at the time.

Morten Tyldum complements this story with two other time periods: he interweaves the war years with flashbacks to Turing's days at school and his heart-breaking love story with a fellow classmate, as well as the 1950s when Turing's homosexuality is discovered. Together the viewer is presented with an elaborate portrayal of this character, one in which the pieces of his life fall together like a puzzle. Topics such as imitation, coding and decoding occur throughout the film in this unusual biopic.

The following worksheets will address
- The chronological yet convoluted narrative that influences the dramatization, and how the various time periods are depicted in colour
- How the topics of imitation, coding and decoding are picked up in many of the film's plotlines and scenes
- How Alan Turing is characterised

Publishing information

Publisher:
AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater
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Photo credits: Universum Film/SquareOne Entertainment
(All the stills are from the DVD of THE IMITATION GAME, published in Germany by Universum Film/SquareOne Entertainment. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)

Time periods
THE IMITATION GAME is not narrated chronologically. The narration moves fluidly between the periods 1928, 1939-1945 and 1951.

Summarise in point form what happens in each of the time periods. In a separate column, expand on how Turing feels and how you think he's doing.

	Events	Alan Turing's mood
1928		
1939-1945		
1951		

Discuss together with the class how the non-linear narration changes the dramatization of the film. In particular expand on the points at which background information is revealed and how this new information shed a new light on what had already been seen.

Colour design

Compare the colour design in each time period. What differences do you notice? What is the relationship of the colours to the narration?

1928

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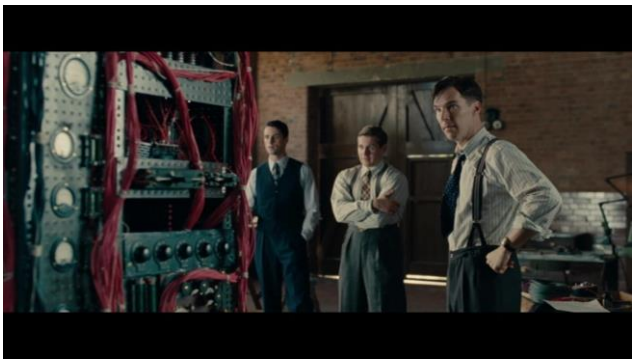

1939-1945

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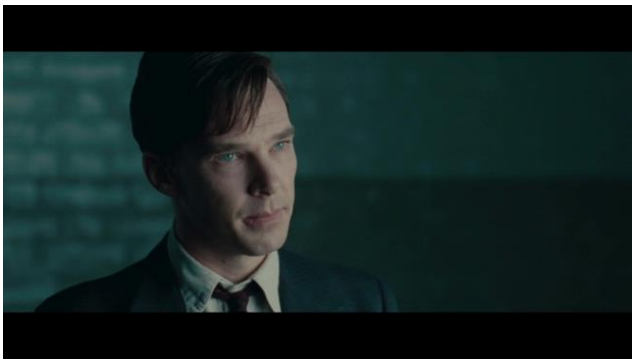

1951

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Imitation, encryption and decryption as main themes
'Pretending', encoding and decoding appear in many different scenes in the film. Name examples in relation to...

Turing's feelings	
The identity of the characters	
The relationship between the characters	
The espionage work	

How Alan Turing is characterised
How is Alan Turing in THE IMITATION GAME introduced? Describe Turing in the following scenes:

During his job interview and his first meeting with the other cryptanalysts	
When he is talking to his school friend Christopher	
After he criticised Joan's behaviour	
When he admits to John that he doesn't want to marry Joan Clarke	
When the decision is made not to prevent the submarine attack	
When he tells Joan that he is gay and that he doesn't have feelings for her	
When he finds out that his friend Christopher has died	
When Joan visits him at home in 1951	

A character portrait
Compose a character portrait of Turing using the film's plot in which the stages in his life as well as his strengths and weaknesses are mentioned.

In conclusion, familiarize yourself with the Turing's real biography and the story of his encryption machine, the so-called "Turing bomb". What artistic liberties did the film take? Discuss together with the class to what extent Turing could accurately be depicted and whether you would find these changes disturbing.