



## Teacher's Resource Silent Film Guide

Here is a collection of silent films from the late 1800s to more contemporary silent films produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To view the winning films of the International Youth Silent Film Festival visit [www.makesilentfilm.com](http://www.makesilentfilm.com)

Short Silent Film

The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (1895)

Directors Auguste and Louis Lumière, 50 seconds



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dgLEDdFddk&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dgLEDdFddk&feature=player_embedded)

Even those with the most basic knowledge of the pioneers of silent cinema will have heard of Auguste and Louis Lumière's audience-terrifying lodestone, 'The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat'. This 50-second documentary comprises a single static take of a steam train pulling in to a station in the southern French coastal town of La Ciotat. Legend has it that when the film was first screened in Paris, the audience darted to the back of the room in an attempt to make way for the oncoming locomotive (a scene that's been lovingly recreated in Scorsese's 'Hugo').

Produced by Kingston Arts | [www.kingstonarts.com.au](http://www.kingstonarts.com.au) | [iysff@kingston.vic.gov.au](mailto:iysff@kingston.vic.gov.au)

Parts of this information has been taken from Time Out London Short Film Guide and ABC.net.au

Short Silent Film

The One-Man Band (1900)

Director Georges Méliès, 1 min 18 secs



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZLnFBqndBE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZLnFBqndBE&feature=player_embedded)

French pioneer Georges Méliès was the first to latch on to the magical possibilities of the film medium, cramming his eye-popping early shorts with elaborate trick shots, fanciful set-ups and gravity-defying costumes. Martin Scorsese sings a sweet hymn to the director-turned-toyshop owner in 'Hugo', including one scene where a film academic (yes, this is a kids' film with where one of the key characters is a film academic) screens a salvaged print of Méliès's most iconic fantasy, 'A Trip to the Moon'. It's probably best you try and see this film (if you haven't already) on DVD or, ideally, in the cinema, so here we've linked to one of his earlier shorts, a gleeful experiment where the director exposes the negative over and over to give the illusion that there's more than one of him on the screen. If you liked that, you may even want to [take a look at his 1898 film, 'The Haunted Castle'](#), which some historians purport to be the first ever horror film.

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Short Silent Film  
The Big Swallow (1901)  
Director James Williamson, 50 seconds



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxcVzs88xRg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxcVzs88xRg&feature=player_embedded)

James Williamson was a British innovator who started his career developing film before graduating to the director's chair. 'The Big Swallow' was arguably the first meta-movie, presenting the camera as not just a means of chronicling life, but as a character and a tangible element of a film's construction. It shows an irate country gentleman standing in front of a plain backdrop urging the cameraman to stop photographing him. The camera keeps filming, and the man gets closer and closer before he opens his mouth and consumes the camera and its operator whole. It may seem like a simple throwaway gag, but then Williamson asks: Who's filming the man licking his lips in the final seconds of the film?

Short Silent Film

The Great Train Robbery (1903)

Director Edwin S Porter, 10 mins 24 secs



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc7wWOmEGGY&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc7wWOmEGGY&feature=player_embedded)

Even before 'Hugo', eagle-eyed viewers could probably guess that Martin Scorsese was a fan of silent cinema from some of the subtle visual references in his earlier work. One such moment features in 1990's 'Goodfellas' when, during a montage sequence late in the film, there's [a mid-shot of Joe Pesci firing a gun directly to the camera](#). Scorsese was making a reference to a shot in Edwin S Porter's seminal 1903 film, 'The Great Train Robbery', in which one of the bandits within the film assumes exactly the same violent stance and unloads his pistol into the lens. Porter was also blazing a trail for narrative cinema, as this film used various sophisticated techniques to envelop the viewer into the action. It may also be interesting to [take a look at Frank S Mottershaw's 'Daring Daylight Robbery'](#) from the same year, a film by which Porter is said to have been influenced.

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Short Silent Film  
Rescued by Rover (1905)  
Director Cecil Hepworth, 6 mins 25 secs



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhNxHfyWTU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhNxHfyWTU&feature=player_embedded)

When Michel Hazanavicius's fond silent-film pastiche 'The Artist' is released in cinemas at the end of the year, chances are you won't read a single review that doesn't lavish praise on the hero's cute mutt, Uggly. But look back to the medium's earliest days, and the potential for the lovable pooch had already been exploited by British screenwriter, producer and director, Cecil Hepworth. Casting his own dog, Blair, in the starring role, this perfectly executed short introduces us to a cute little baby who is kidnapped by a mad old pauper while being taken on a walk with her mother. But Rover can smell tragedy in the air and dashes through the streets (and even across a river) to rescue his young playmate. When the master of the house is led to the thief's room, he quaintly rescues the baby and marches off, leaving the old pauper to her bottle of gin. In reality, that scene would probably have involved bloodied fists, Stanley knives and a seven-week trial at the Old Bailey.

Contemporary Silent Film

The Artist (2011)

Director Michel Hazanavicius, 100 mins



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8K9AZcSQJE>

In Hollywood in 1927, George Valentin, JEAN DUJARDIN, is a hugely popular star of silent swashbuckling movies and is invariably accompanied by his talented and faithful dog. Though adored by millions all over the world, he is stuck in a loveless marriage - PENELOPE ANN MILLER plays his wife. When talking pictures are introduced Valentin is unimpressed by the new medium. Meanwhile he's become attracted to bubbly Peppy Miller, BERENICE BEJO, a starlet on the way up. (ABC.net.au)

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