

**“REELIZING” THE FULL POTENTIAL
OF CAPTIONING EDUCATIONAL FILMS
FOR THE DEAF
THROUGH LESSON GUIDE
UTILIZATION**

By
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As we begin the decade of the 1980's, the Captioned Films for the Deaf Program and all who are associated with the education of the deaf can look with pride on the accomplishments of the program since 1965. A national network of 65 depositories exists, each capable of circulating over 950 captioned educational films—films which have passed rigid standards for selection by educators of the deaf from among the estimated 25,000 films in the educational film marketplace.

While the films have been and will continue to be the most visible and sought after facet of the program, another facet of the program is of equal importance. Since 1965, 15 volumes of Lesson Guides for Captioned Films have also been created. Each Lesson Guide is designed to give the film user insights into the message, content, purposes, and applications of each film in the collection. Each Lesson Guide follows a continuously improved formula of providing film users the necessary information on the most effective utilization of captioned films. Going beyond the synopsis provided by the Captioned Films Catalog, the Lesson Guides offer a comprehensive outline of each film. In recent years, the Lesson Guides have also offered a comprehensive subject heading index attempting to cross-reference each film under the maximum number of possible subject headings: In 1978, Volume XIV of the Lesson Guides added for the first time, an inclusive alphabetical title index.

Captioned films can make a difference if they are utilized wisely, judiciously, and with care. Lesson Guides offer the user of captioned films the inside track on effective utilization of captioned films and a chance of making that all important breakthrough to knowledge with their students.

If we are in fact committed to better, more effective utilization of the captioned films we already have (and can look forward to receiving), Captioned Films Lesson Guides are a necessary, vital, and valuable resource.

INTRODUCTION

Of the many national, state, and local programs and projects serving the needs of the hearing impaired, one of the most established, effective, and visible is the Captioned Films for the Deaf Program. With a national network of 65 depositories, each capable of circulating over 950 captioned educational films—films which have passed rigid standards for selection by educators of the deaf from among the estimated 25,000 educational films available nationally—one’s perception might be that captioned educational films are the ideal stand-alone teaching tool. What is often overlooked, however, is no educational medium—films or otherwise—is intended to teach in and of itself.

In the case of Captioned Films for the Deaf, an additional frequent oversight is the excellent series of Lesson Guides for Captioned Films, which accompany every summer’s harvest of newly captioned educational films. Designed as a training and utilization guide, Lesson Guides for Captioned Films give the film user insight into the message, content, purposes, and applications of each film in the collection. The 15 volume series of lesson guides follows a continuously improved formula of providing film users detailed and informative data on available captioned films.

The Captioned Films for the Deaf Program is committed to better, more effective, wider utilization of the captioned films we already have as well as committed to improving all quantitative and qualitative aspects of the selection, captioning, and distribution processes. Captioned Films Lesson Guides are a necessary, vital, and valuable resource in meeting and fulfilling this commitment. In the balance of the paper to follow, four topic areas will be covered in reference to these lesson guides:

1. How do the lesson guides originate?
2. What educational information is contained in each volume of lesson guides and what information is contained in the lesson guide specifically written for each newly captioned film?
3. How can the utilization of lesson guides be improved?
4. What are some anticipated outcomes of lesson guide utilization?

“REELIZING” THE FULL POTENTIAL OF CAPTIONED EDUCATIONAL FILMS FOR THE DEAF THROUGH LESSON GUIDE UTILIZATION

In the 4-week annual summer workshops for the writing of caption scripts and lesson guides, 12 writers who are professional educators of the deaf work on 65-70 films under the management of the Captioned Films and Telecommunications Branch, Captioned Films for the Deaf Distribution Center and a workshop staff consisting of a project director, director of captioning, director of lesson guides, and production coordinator. The workshops are conducted in various national educational locations with the site being the determinant for specific names of editions of lesson guides. For example, Volume XV, the Louisiana Edition was produced in Baton Rouge at the Louisiana State School for the Deaf in 1979.

Additionally, the summer workshop is now being supplemented by a new activity: Field Captioning. Selected experienced caption and lesson guide writers are adapting films on their “home field.”

This activity is in response to the increased number of films being selected for captioning: Approximately 30 films will be field captioned in 1980. The entire adaptation program is part of the Captioned Films for the Deaf Distribution Center, which, itself, is an activity of the Captioned Films and Telecommunications Branch, BEH, USOE under contract with the Conference of Executives of American Schools for the Deaf. Each writer completes between four to seven films during the month, depending on film length and complexity. Each writer completes a caption script and lesson guide for each assigned film. The start-to-finish process of completing all required work on a film results in the individual writer being the most knowledgeable person on the content, intent, and focus of his/her film. By the time the film, script, and lesson guide have passed through the rigorous system of review and editing by the writer, directors, proofreaders, and typists, all there is to know about that film in an educational context is documented in the script or lesson guide. For the film user who is ordering or selecting appropriate media for educational applications, the lesson guides communicate more information about a film than any other source. While preview of any film is always recommended before classroom utilization, the lesson guide can provide excellent information prior to selection and ordering of a film.

To reach the objective of being a better consumer of captioned films, one needs to examine the various components of a recent lesson guide.

The main parts of a lesson guide (volume) are (a) foreword, (b) utilization guidelines, (c) table of contents, (d) list of films within the particular edition, (e) individual film lesson guides, (f) subject heading index, and (g) alphabetical title index.

The “utilization guidelines” component is an explanation of the specific parts of a typical lesson guide, plus brief suggestions as to *how* films may be utilized.

An important point in this area is the recommendation that films be shown two or three times to the hearing impaired audience. Teachers and other users are often reluctant to show a film more than once because of real or imaginary pressure from administrators or a “feeling” that students can grasp all the concepts presented in a film simply because it is captioned (or for other reasons).

The list of film titles at the beginning of each lesson guide includes only those found in that particular edition. In addition to the alphabetically arranged film titles, the CFD number, suggested grade level(s), and lesson-guide page numbers are given.

A typical film guide contains a heading that includes basic information about the film: complete title, CFD number, distributor, copyright date, color or black and white, suggested levels of use, suggested area(s) of use, running time (in minutes), and SYNCAP (indicates that the original sound track has been removed and replaced by a new sound track. This new sound track is SYNchronized to go along identically with the CAPtions). SYNCAP is not used with dialogue films because it is impossible to match a new sound track with the onscreen speakers’ lip movements.

The synopsis is merely a brief statement of the film’s content. The general objectives can be thought of as the purpose of the film—what the producer (or filmmaker) wanted the film to show. Behavioral objectives are listed as suggestions only. The evaluation of student learning is implicit in these

objectives. Instructors are encouraged to adapt, add, or delete objectives as needed. Only information that can be obtained directly from the visuals or captions is in the behavioral objectives section.

Researching, guest lectures, bulletin boards, field trips, and other activities that an instructor may wish to incorporate into the lesson/unit are listed under related activities.

At one time, resource materials was an area filled with lists of related books, filmstrips, and films. However, this area is now left blank for good reason. Users are encouraged to note *locally* available resources that they have used successfully and may want to refer to in the future.

One of the most important components of a film guide is the script. This is the narration or dialogue that appears on the film as captions. If an off-screen narrator speaks, then individual captions are combined into paragraph form. In a dialogue film, characters are identified within italics. Characters are not identified in the captions except under special circumstances, e.g., off-screen dialogue with possible confusion as to the character speaking.

Underlined words in the script are those that the writer feels are important for the comprehension of the concepts presented in the film. A user/teacher may want to preteach this vocabulary before showing the film. These words are *not* underlined in the captions. Italicized captions indicate either an off-screen speaker (not a narrator) or a song.

Visuals such as artwork, diagrams, maps, and sketches are sometimes included in film guides for use by the instructor and/or students. Users are encouraged to remove these from the guide (all pages are perforated) for use as overhead transparencies and/or handouts/worksheets.

Last, but not least, are two indices—the subject heading index and the alphabetical title index. *Sears List of Subject Headings* is the reference used to compile the subject heading index. While the format is different from the catalog cards that most users are familiar with, the use of the index is the same. The alphabetical title index is useful when a user knows the title of a film but cannot determine which subject heading to look under. In addition to the titles of all captioned educational films, the indices also contain the CFD number (needed to order a film), the suggested grade level(s), the edition (in which a specific film guide is found), and the number of pages.

When searching for a film on a specific subject, users should consult the most recent edition of a lesson guide. All films currently available in CFD depositories are listed in both indices, and films that have been withdrawn will have been deleted. Use of an outdated index or CFD catalog may mislead a user into ordering a film that has been, in fact, withdrawn from circulation.

A nagging question that recurs annually as writers gather for the summer workshop is: “How extensive should film guides be?” It is difficult to determine this because of the wide range of ways that films are utilized. Some users prefer films as an introduction to a unit; while others may use the film as a culminating or review activity; still others may use the film as the core of a unit.

In order to meet this variety of needs, more behavioral objectives and related activities are given than most users would actually need. The user is presented with several options—he/she can pick and choose as required.

It should be immediately apparent that utilization of Lesson Guides for Captioned Films will provide the professional educator of the deaf an excellent means of using better what Captioned Films already has, namely, over 950 educational captioned films. If the educator uses and refers to the lesson guides, the effectiveness of the utilization of the films themselves should improve dramatically. But of equal focus in this paper is using the actual lesson guides themselves to a fuller extent than has historically been the case. Following are some suggestions for facilitating and promoting lesson guide utilization:

1. Film depository managers should include a copy of the lesson guide with the film when filling film requests. The immediate access to the lesson guide when the film is distributed to the film user will provide an immediate source of information and reference.
2. Each captioned film account holder should order sufficient copies of the lesson guides to facilitate access and reference. Minimum quantities would feed copies to administrators, department heads, library, staff lounge, and copies for general circulation, but individual staff copies should be considered and encouraged.
3. Utilization of the script as a reading assignment prior to film viewing should improve viewer comprehension, familiarization, and retention. The school library could be prepared to keep on file multiple copies of selected scripts as a teacher resource.
4. A frequent source of confusion and/or “red tape” that some educators find objectionable is locating a film in a specific lesson guide volume. Although the lesson guides are cumulative, locating a specific title in a specific volume gives some people problems. A possible solution is for account holders to assemble lesson guides in numerical loose leaf binders. Binders could be numbered CFD #1-99, 100-199, and 200-299, etc. Although similar to the existing structure of Volumes I through XV of the Lesson Guides, this approach avoids reference to a specific volume number and title and allows the consumer to readily locate a specific film lesson guide based on CFD # alone.
5. Media specialists and others are encouraged to present workshops based on what has been presented in this paper. Supervisors are, likewise, encouraged to require some accountability in the way that films are used. Ready-made film guides can and will simplify the time-consuming task of preparing plans for using captioned educational films.
6. The development by account holders of “cumulative folders” on films utilized by each account. Such a folder might contain transparencies, worksheets, suggested resource materials, and other information, which film users contribute for the benefit of future users of the film. In practice, and educator receiving a captioned film would also receive the cumulative folder for reference and additional optimal input.

If we utilize better the lesson guides we already have, we should in turn effect a better utilization of the captioned films we already have (and will continue to receive annually). Lesson guide utilization should:

1. Lead to expanded knowledge of film content prior to viewing and thus to improved film selections;

2. Promote an improved relationship between classroom lesson content and film content;
3. Promote integrating films into lesson and unit content and minimize stand-alone, no pre or post teaching film utilization;
4. Promote improved student comprehension of film content and concepts; and
5. Promote improved overall lesson content as the film lesson guide serves as a source of teaching ideas and resources beyond the use of the film only.

CONCLUSION

The Captioned Films for the Deaf Adaptation Program has attempted in its 15-year history to select the best educational films from the marketplace utilizing experienced educators of the deaf to select films, write captions, and prepare lesson guides. A great deal of time, effort, and expertise have gone into making the Captioned Films Program a reality. Yet the ultimate reality is not the program itself but rather the impact that captioned films—in concert with every other available resource—make in the lives of deaf students. Captioned films can make a difference if they are utilized wisely, selectively, and with the proper amount of pre and post viewing instruction and preparation. Captioned Films Lesson Guides are vital and instrumental to effective film utilization. Reference to and utilization of lesson guides improve the prospects for that all important breakthrough to knowledge by our students.

Lesson Guides for Captioned Films *can* make a difference. Invest in your students' educational future by investing a little of your time in reading and utilizing LESSON GUIDES FOR CAPTIONED FILMS. Further information on Captioned Educational Films and Lesson Guides can be obtained by writing to:

Leonard Novick, Acting Director
Captioned Films for the Deaf
Distribution Center
5034 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

(Copies of Volumes I-XV are available in limited supply from CFDDC except for Volumes I, II, III, and VIII, which are out of print.)

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