

Arrival activity (Digital Resource 4a)

Look at this information from Box Office Mojo on *Gravity*.

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=gravity.htm>

Total Lifetime Grosses

Domestic	(US) \$274,092,705	38.3%
+ Foreign:	\$442,300,000	61.7%
= Worldwide:	\$716,392,705	

Gravity's production costs were around \$100 million and this film made over three and a half times that cost so the film went well into profit. In pairs, quickly rank the following possible reasons for the film's success:

- Stars – Sandra Bullock and George Clooney
- The marketing campaign
- The use of 3D technology
- Director - Alfonso Cuaron
- The cinematic spectacle of the film
- The film's narrative.

You probably ranked the role of stars very highly when assessing the reasons for *Gravity*'s box office success. Sandra Bullock's starring role in the film seems to have played a key role in the commercial success of the film. She's made a big comeback in recent years with a number of box-office hits.

Task 1 (Digital Resource 4b)

- List who you think were the top ten stars of 2013.

There are a number of assessments of how highly stars are rated. The online magazine *Vulture* came up with the following top ten stars of 2013. *Vulture* based this on several criteria: US box office, overseas box office, studio value, likeability, Oscars, critics' views, Twitter mentions and tabloid value.

<http://www.vulture.com/2013/10/most-valuable-movie-stars.html#/all/vulture-rankings>

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Robert Downey Jr. | 2. Leonardo DiCaprio | 3. Jennifer Lawrence | 4. Sandra Bullock | 5. Brad Pitt |
| 6. Will Smith | 7. Christian Bale | 8. Denzel Washington | 9. Tom Hanks | 10. Johnny Depp |

Gravity (Cuaron, USA/UK, 2013)

Production and Distribution: Stars – Sandra Bullock

In small groups, discuss the following:

- Compare your list with *Vulture's*. In what ways were they different? Give reasons for this.
- Which stars were, in your opinion, missing from *Vulture's* list?
- Which films released in 2013 were responsible for these stars' success?
- Was there anything surprising in the list about the gender and age of the stars?

Task 2 (Digital Resource 4c)



SANDRA BULLOCK - The Never-Been-Better Superstar

After a few years of lying low, she came back with a hit comedy and the best-reviewed movie of the year.

It would be tough to top the year that Sandra Bullock had in 2009 — she had two giant hits in *The Proposal* and *The Blind Side*, and won an Oscar for the latter — but 2013 might just give 2009 a run for its money. Bullock's summer pairing with Melissa McCarthy in *The Heat* took in \$159.1 million (nearly the same gross as her 2009 comeback *The Proposal*), and it served as a reminder that Bullock can still draw huge crowds in her wheelhouse. And then came *Gravity*, which recently premiered to the best reviews she's ever had, and may well end up becoming her biggest hit (and bring her another Oscar nod).

Gravity could also be a possible solution to Bullock's most vulnerable spot: her international appeal. She's beloved by studios, by audiences (only three stars ranked higher in the likability poll), and by the tabloids but her name means much more at home than abroad, with *The Blind Side* and *The Heat* both struggling to top \$50 million internationally, a mere fraction of their US take. But it seems safe to assume that *Gravity*, a 3-D effects extravaganza, won't have the same problem (it's off to a strong start abroad, with most major territories still to open), so studios hope that audiences abroad recognize what we already know in the US: the nearly 50-year-old superstar has never been bigger.

Gravity (Cuaron, USA/UK, 2013)

Production and Distribution: Stars – Sandra Bullock



Rank Compared to 2012	7 places higher
Domestic Box Office	\$163,473,346
Overseas Box Office	\$53,202,067
Studio Value (1–10)	9
Likability	79%
Oscars	1 win
Critics' Score (1–100)	58
Twitter Mentions	756
Tabloid Value (1–10)	7

Domestic Box Office, Overseas Box Office, and Critics' Score are weighted medians.

- Given this information, suggest reasons why Sandra Bullock is so successful.

Task 2 (Digital Resource 4c)

1. Watch the trailer for *Gravity*. To what extent does the trailer use Sandra Bullock to sell the film?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0ijEEivCbg>

2. Do you think that her role in *All About Steve* (2009) is what audiences in the past have typically thought a Sandra Bullock role should be? Are there any issues with this here?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGpne6wPBPY>

3. Based on the trailer for *The Blind Side* (2009), why do you think that Bullock won an Oscar for this role? How does it differ from her other film that year – *All About Steve*?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ3kwMq18-8>

4. In the trailer for *The Heat* (2013), what sort of role is Bullock taking on here? Is this different from our usual expectations of her?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST16k80bDYE>

Task 2 (Digital Resource 4c)

- Look at the other star in *Gravity* - George Clooney. Choose four of his most recent films and look at the trailers for these. Try to establish what kind of star Clooney is.
- Read this article from *The Guardian* on Sandra Bullock and highlight the main points made about Sandra Bullock in *Gravity*.

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/feb/06/sandra-bullock-pain-gravity-oscars-george-clooney-2014>