Pride

(Warchus, 2014)

Unit 1: Welsh and global films

Focus areas:

- **media contexts**
- **representation**
- **narrative**
- **film language.**

Overview

- **Production:** Pathé, BBC Films, Ingenious, BFI, Calamity Films.
- **Age Rating:** 15
- **Setting:** Onllwyn, a Welsh mining community and central London.
- **Plot:** *Pride* follows a group of activists – Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) – from London who raise funds to support the miners during the 1984 miners' strike, leading them to form an unexpected alliance with a small Welsh village. Initially, the villagers of Onllwyn are reluctant to embrace this new partnership, however, through empathy and a shared purpose, the two communities begin to work together and unite against prejudice and injustice. Inspired by real events, the film celebrates the power of solidarity against a political backdrop of social unrest.
- **Key themes:** Unity, identity, political activism, overcoming prejudice.

Part 1: Media contexts

Cultural context

- Due to widespread discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals at the time, the film reflects a culture of hostility towards the LGSM group, from both the national press and some members of the mining community. This tension underscores the film's central theme of overcoming prejudice through solidarity and shared struggle.
- Music plays a pivotal role in anchoring the film within its historical and cultural context. The soundtrack to the film features songs such as 'I Want to Break Free' by Queen and 'Karma Chameleon' by Culture Club, which help signify the vibrant pop culture of the 1980s. These iconic tracks evoke the era's spirit of resistance and self-expression and support the creation of a hopeful and optimistic tone throughout the film.

- Welsh mining villages, like that of Onllwyn, had strong cultural identities characterised by close-knit communities and solidarity. These villages were shaped by shared struggles and cultural practices, such as music and communal gatherings.

Social context

- Due to the closure of nationalised industries, such as coal and steel, many communities faced economic hardship. This created a culture of conflict, poverty and civil unrest as working-class people lost their jobs and communities became divided.
- The political context of the strike is communicated in the film through glimpses of news broadcasts at the start and in conversations in the mining community of South Wales.
- Social attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community reflected deep-rooted stereotypes and, as we see in the character of Joe, led to many people hiding their identity. An understanding of the AIDS crisis is also important as this led to further stigma and forms a backdrop to the other struggles of people at the time.

Historical context

- *Pride* is a film based on real events in British history. It starts on Saturday 30 June 1984, during the miners' strike, where coal miners went on strike to protest the Conservative Prime Minister's closure of British coal mines and importing cheaper coal. The use of archive footage depicting the clashes between miners and the police and songs such as 'Solidarity Forever' position the film as politically aligned with working-class people.
- Pride marches originated in response to the Stonewall Riots in 1969 and became annual demonstrations. At the 1985 London Pride march, miners marched alongside LGBTQ+ activists, carrying their union banners as a symbol of solidarity and resistance against discrimination.
- After becoming leader of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first female prime minister from 1979 to 1990. Her government made significant changes to Britain, including introducing privatisation, closing coal mines and restricting the power of trade unions. These actions sparked industrial conflict and led to the 1984–85 miners' strike.
- During the miners' strike, women formed support groups, such as Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC), as an act of solidarity. They supported the strike through fundraising, organising events and supporting families with food and essential items. These groups were very important because they gave women a stronger voice in their communities and many of them worked with LGSM, like we see in *Pride*, uniting the two movements.

Institutional context

- *Pride* received funding from the British Film Institute and the National Lottery. Both organisations are concerned with supporting heritage films that are culturally significant and reflect British life and values. This funding allowed the film to focus on historical accuracy and social issues rather than purely commercial appeal.
- *Pride* was released in 2014, years after the miners' strikes. This influences how modern audiences interpret the film as both entertainment and education.

- The film has an impressive cast of well-known British actors, including Bill Nighy, Imelda Staunton, Dominic West, Paddy Considine, George MacKay, Monica Dolan and Joe Gilgun. Having so many famous actors in a low-budget film is unusual and likely contributed to the film's success and appeal. Interestingly, Warchus cast non-Welsh actors in Welsh roles which has been questioned by critics and viewers.
- Director, Marcus Warchus, was relatively new to the world of film but had a successful career as a theatre director.
- The film won the Queer Palm award and the Dorian Award for LGBTQ Film of the Year.

Part 2: Representation

- *Pride* challenges superficial stereotypical representations of gay and lesbian characters through positive depictions of activism. Mark Ashton was a real person who founded LGSM, adding to the film's authenticity. In *Pride*, he is often portrayed as a passionate and determined leader who is also empathetic and humorous.
- Gender inequality is shown by the noticeable gender imbalance in LGSM. Steph (a northern woman) is witty and perceptive, highlighting women's strength in male-dominated environments. Zoe and Carol demonstrate women's vital role in political activism. Carol represents 1980s radical feminism and the inequalities women faced.
- The film portrays Welsh working-class communities with warmth and solidarity, while acknowledging stereotypes such as the importance of song and hospitality.
- Within the Welsh community, women are largely supportive, open-minded, strong and natural leaders. *Pride* contrasts generational attitudes depicting older characters, such as Dai and Cliff, as open-minded and some younger characters as initially resistant.

Part 3: Narrative

- *Pride* follows a straightforward linear structure, showing events over a single year. It begins with the Gay Pride March in London on Saturday 30 June 1984 and ends at the same event on 29 June 1985. This encourages viewers to reflect on the characters' progress and achievements during that year.
- The film focuses on several main characters rather than one. Mark, based on the real activist Mark Ashton, is introduced first, making him seem like the central figure and hero. However, the narrative includes and celebrates many heroes across different ages and genders.
- The narrative is also structured around binary oppositions; for example, freedom and oppression and acceptance and prejudice.
- The resolution of the film is uplifting and hopeful. Cliff's response to the interviewer challenges the stigma presented by the press. The text at the end of the film highlights the positive outcomes for characters like Sian and the political impact of the strike.

Part 4: Media language

Key sequence analysis 1 – Opening scene: 00:00:55–00:06:04

Mise-en-scène

- The settings and costumes reflect the 1984 era, such as telephones and hairstyles.
- A red flag with the phrase 'Thatcher Out!' hangs from top floor windows, positioning Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party as the villains of the film.
- Banners, signs and flags convey activism and reinforce the political and social context.
- Joe's facial expressions throughout this scene depict his internal conflict between his desire to join the march but his hesitancy with wanting to remain less 'visible'.

Editing

- Real life/archive footage of the miners' strike is used at the beginning of the film to remind audiences that the film is based on true events, adding authenticity and realism.
- Cross cutting between Mark and Joe helps to establish the main characters who will play an important role in the narrative and the movement.
- Cuts are relatively fast paced to create an energetic atmosphere and a sense of urgency during the protest.

Sound

- The non-diegetic sound of the trade union 'Solidarity Forever' plays. Not only is the meaning of the song significant to the images on the screen, but this is a song that will be used later in the film to symbolise unity and togetherness.
- The diegetic sound of the television in Mark's flat introduces the conflict in the film. The announcement of the pit closures and job losses, coupled with footage of Margaret Thatcher asserting her position as a 'firm leader' establishes the conflict and begins to position the audience with the LGSM group as the camera follows Mark to the march.
- The sounds of whistles, chanting and shouting help to build the energetic environment of the march.

Cinematography

- Close-up reaction shots are used to convey emotions; for example, Mark's reaction to the television broadcast and Joe's uncertainty and fear as he emerges from the station to join the march.
- Natural lighting is used to give the scene a sense of realism and optimism.
- Handheld camera movements are evident in the march scene, adding to the sense of realism and positioning the audience to feel part of the protest.

Key sequence analysis 2 – arriving at Onllwyn: 00:26:00–00:32:20

Mise-en-scène

- This scene sees some of the LGSM members arrive in the Welsh village of Onllwyn. The majority of the scene takes place in The Onllwyn Miners Welfare Hall, which is depicted as a traditional but lively setting.
- The bright yellow bus and the colourful clothing of the LGSM members act as visual symbols. Initially, this positions them as outsiders in the rural, Welsh landscape but can also foreshadow the happiness and optimism they will bring to the community.
- The members of LGSM are welcomed and introduced in the small and intimate space in the kitchen of the welfare hall. The Welsh residents stand directly opposite them, symbolising the initial divide between the two communities. Dai bridges the gap between the groups, offering a handshake and a warm welcome for the new arrivals.

Editing

- *Pride* uses seamless continuity editing with shot-reverse-shot patterns, placing an emphasis on dialogue and the relationships developing between characters and communities.
- The editing in this scene is slower and longer takes are used to capture characters' facial expressions and body language. For example, the long shot used when LGSM first enter the building lingers on the group, highlighting their hesitancy and awkwardness in a new and unfamiliar space.
- Reaction shots are used frequently in this scene to signify the frosty reception LGSM receive from the wider mining community.

Sound

- There is an emphasis on dialogue in this scene to establish character relationships. Dai's initial welcome is one of openness and warmth, which contrasts with the welcome they receive from the wider community. As they enter the hall, the band stop playing and the crowd falls silent.
- The frosty reception and scepticism from the Welsh residents continues as Mark gives a speech. There is a notable lack of applause and his jokes are met with silence, adding to the tension and awkward atmosphere of the scene.

Cinematography

- A montage helps to depict the Miners Welfare Hall as a hub of the community. Shots show large groups chatting, tables of people playing cards and a child asleep on the floor.
- A variety of shots are used in this scene to depict intimate conversations and wider group responses. During conversations, for example, between the committee and LGSM in the kitchen, medium and close-up shots are used to capture facial expressions and gestures, whereas in the community hall, wide shots and long shots are used to highlight the initial divide between LGSM and the Welsh mining community.
- High-angle shots are used to capture the movement of the bus, emphasising the contrast between the vibrant urban setting of London and the rural Welsh landscape.