SHIPBREAKERS (2004)

MEDIA EDUCATION STUDY GUIDE

CUST 432 951

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JULY 11, 2008

For Matt Hern
FILM SUMMARY

Shipbreakers is an award winning Canadian documentary which debuted for the 2004 Vancouver Film Festival, directed by Michael Kot. Set on the shores of Alang India, where some of the worlds largest ships are sent to be decommissioned and dismantled to harvest the valuable scrap metal. This scrap metal is refined into steel rods that account for over 80% of the construction steel consumed by the entire country. However, the metal recycling industry comes with enormous consequences to the workers, to the country, to the environment and to the world.

The shipbreaking industry took off in this region in 1983 and reached the pinnacle of production in 2004, boosting 40 000 migrant workers. An article in The Maritime Executive reports that in 2008 the shipbreaking industry in Alang is nearly dead, employing a dismal 5 000 workers.
“A ship a day a death a day”, this tag line is representative of the dangers to human life as it is estimated that 40-400 people a year die while working in the shipbreaking industry. Some from explosions or falls, but many will contract cancers caused by asbestos, PCBs and other toxic substances. Children workers are a large presence in this workforce, it is difficult for many people here to turn away this high wage of nearly eight cents an hour. Though the risks are high, one worker commented that if it were not for the work, starvation would kill him.

The region in and around the shipbreaking sites are also changing, what were once pristine ocean beaches, are graveyards to the massive corpses. Roadside markets have popped up around the perimeter selling anything from light fixtures, counters, toilets and even the kitchen sink.

Though a high percentage of the ship itself is recycled, there are items that are merely expelled into the Arabian Sea, leaving devastating environmental consequences. Thaindian News reports
that a newly implemented environmental management plan has been mandated for the Alang region by The Supreme Court.

While we observe this devastation from afar, ultimately this is a global, rather than a regional dilemma. As recently as 1998 US Military vessels were spotted in Alang for dismantle.

Shipbreakers can be purchased from The National Film Board of Canada at:

Home version
http://www2.nfb.ca/boutique/XXNFBibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?formatid=51361&lr_ecode=collection&minisite=10000&respid=22372

Educational version
http://www2.nfb.ca/boutique/XXNFBibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?formatid=51361&lr_ecode=collection&minisite=10002&respid=22372
RATIONALE

The technology education environment in the British Columbia public school system seems to lack issues of community, environment and the world. This powerful film addresses many issues that can in some way have a link to lessons taught in B.C. shop classes.

In metal working class, students should have a grander understanding of the materials they use, and the methods to produce commodities such as aluminum and mild steel. Students could gain an appreciation of such products and make educated and informed decisions on the type of product they would purchase for their own use, whether they purchase newly manufactured materials or salvaged/recycled materials. Students could also gain understanding of global economies, manufacturing, recycling, and issues of the environment. What costs to the environment do we pay, as a result to purchasing these products?

In Automotive Mechanics students learn the fundamental theories of operation and repair techniques, however, they may not realize the ecological footprint that they themselves leave behind. What are the consequences of discarding antifreeze or oil down the drain? or releasing freon gas into the atmosphere? What decisions can we as consumers make to lessen environmental harm when we purchase parts and materials to repair our cars?
UNIT GOALS

• To develop an understanding of reading media for the purpose of analysis
• To contrast labour laws and work conditions in Canada and abroad (child and health-safety laws)
• To recognize the effects of poor labour practices
• To recognize noteworthiness of recycling in the shop setting and globally
• To recognize environmental consequences from the actions of industry, here and abroad.

PRESCRIBED LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM IRP
Technology Education 11 and 12
Automotive Technology

Self and Society

• Describe the historical and potential future impact of energy, power, and transportation systems on the environment
• Outline social, legal, and ethical responsibilities associated with vehicle operation
• Demonstrate knowledge of and apply recycling practices.
Safety

• Identify WCB regulations related to the automotive shop environment
• Apply safe and healthy work practices
• Consistently apply safe and healthy work practices in an automotive technology environment
• Describe and evaluate potential vehicle and workplace hazards.
Lesson 1

Topic: Safety and Working Conditions

In the Shipbreakers movie, workers are exposed to horrendous working conditions for what amounts to eight cents an hour. Workers are seen barefoot, handling heavy pieces of metal and operating equipment such as gas operated cutting torches. This film vividly shows the conditions and consequences of this unregulated industry. As the cutting torches work their way through steel plate, they are releasing toxins from within the ships, burning chemicals and asbestos alike. This toxic smoke plume verifies that land, air and sea are jointly affected. Students may be able to appreciate the exploitation of children their own age in third world nations.

This movie is an example of good storytelling, the use of media and sound to convey a message. Students could examine and critically analyze camera angles, sound, pauses (Matt Hern) to read into the story line.

Ultimately, I would like to use this lesson as a prelude to introduce the safety lessons which are essential to keep students safe in the high school auto shop.
**LESSON PLAN 1**

**Name:** Mr. Kotani  
**Time:**  
**Date:**  
**Lesson title:** Safety and Working Conditions  
**Course:** MX 11/12

**Objectives:**
By the end of the lesson students will:

- Contrast work conditions between this third world country and Canada
- Identify unsafe work practices from the movie, and describe how North American standards differ
- Explain major themes in the movie Shipbreakers
- Develop an understanding of reading media for the purpose of analysis

**Time:**

**Introduction:**
- Pose questions compare/contrast elements about the movie, break into small groups to brainstorm solutions
- Discuss group responses with class

**Body of Lesson:**
- Discussion on movie, examining selected clips. Identify key elements: work conditions, environment hazards and make connections to the Worksafe Handbook
- Work through activity sheets from Worksafe Handbook
- Examine clips, concentrating on impact of camera angles, sounds, music and effects to analyze the role of the media

**Closure:**
- Close by reviewing key topics from the movie, safety, materials, environment.

**Assessment:** Students will hand in work sheets.

**Resources:**
- Clips from Shipbreakers
Lesson 2

Topic: Materials

Shipbreakers gives examples of devastation to human life and the environment all in the name of reclamation of a resource commodity. However, there are chemical and substances harmful to people and the environment that are not reclaimed, but merely discarded.

As the cost of energy rises, so does that of commodities such as metals. Here at home and abroad we will need to find alternate ways to meet our needs. In the high school shops it is critical that schools and students find economical methods to access materials. Recycled products become an important aspect of production and manufacturing in the high school. Auto recyclers and scrap metal yards may be a inexpensive alternative for students to meet the requirements they have.

The pollutants that are released in India seem mind boggling, but the reality is that in the automobile industry here at home we may not be practicing the most ethical methods. We have hazardous products such as asbestos brakes, battery acid, antifreeze, refrigerant, gas/oil charged shocks, oils, tires, plastics, body shop chemicals and paints and so on that are still improperly disposed of by many. The dumpsters of auto repair facilities and body shops tell the tale.
LESSON PLAN 2

Name: Mr. Kotani  
Time:  
Date:  
Lesson title: Materials  
Course: MX 11/12

Objectives:
By the end of the lesson students will:

• Identify alternative methods to legitimately acquire materials rather than purchasing new materials
• Identify methods to collect, store or handle unsafe materials or chemicals.

Introduction:
- Lesson
  Brainstorm alternative methods to purchase parts and materials
  ie. trader magazines, internet, auto recyclers, salvage yards, metal superstores
  Pros/cons to each method.
  Discuss methods to collect, store, handle materials. ie motor oils, antifreeze, refrigerant, scrap metal.

Body of Lesson:
- Demonstration on recovering refrigerant gas from an automotive air conditioning system.
- Demonstrate filtering refrigerant in order to reclaim and reuse product.

Closure:
- Review key concepts of demonstration
- Review the key factors recovery is necessary. Renewable product, government mandated.

Assessment:

Resources:
WHIMIS Handbook
R-134a refrigerant recovery machine
Class set safety glasses
Lesson 3

Topic: The Environment

Shipbreakers gives vivid examples of pollution to land, air and sea. In automotive mechanics class students may see the value of vehicle care to maintain or improve efficiency of their vehicles. They may find value in methods to improve fuel efficiency and reduce tailpipe emissions. In the past, the automotive industry would actually repair or service broken components, today they “re & re” components, they remove and replace the component, usually with an inexpensive off shore product. This measure brings North American labour costs down for the consumer, it is much cheaper replacing components with off shore parts than to service the parts, but increases landfill waste. Students could see the benefits of collecting discarded aluminum radiators, engine components and scrap metal and selling them to metal recyclers for cash, reducing material destined for the landfill. Discussions could center on other recycling methods and initiatives.
**LESSON PLAN 3**

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<td><strong>Lesson title:</strong> The Environment</td>
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**Objectives:**

By the end of the lesson students will:

- Contrast environmental hazards in the movie with that of hazards at home in the automotive industry
- Describe methods or initiatives in the auto repair industry which are designed to reduce environmental risks

**Time:**

**Introduction:**
Lesson

- Compare/contrast environmental issues that we are dealing with presently in our country/province to that of the film
- Examine and discuss articles relating to pollution and waste programs from Environment Canada Website

**Body of Lesson:**

- Lesson introduce WHMIS labels and data sheets and procedures to create them
- Activity create product information data sheets and labels as per WHMIS handbook

**Closure:**

- Complete one data sheet and label collectively with class.

**Assessment:**

**Resources:**

- WHMIS Handbook
- Environment Canada Website
Unit Conclusion

The reality of technology education is that many students in these classes come for certain reasons. They may have disabilities of learning, physical, and of behavioral. Many IEP’s require that a student only receive effort marks. The power of film for some of these students may be great. The fear of reading is shed, and these learners may have meaningful input on the material that they have ingested. For other students it may reinforce the beliefs that they have and others may find perspective on their lives as it relates to the world (Buckingham 119).