

1e LLCER – Anglais - Theme : « L’imaginaire » – Axe : « Imagination visionnaire »

“Science-Fiction & Visions of the Future” – Analysing film extracts

Niveau visé: B1 vers B2

Document 1: An extract from *I, Robot*, Alex Proyas, 2004

<https://nuage05.apps.education.fr/index.php/s/QQXicH3HREcZS4m>

I – Global comprehension. Watch the full extract and take notes to answer the following questions:

Where and when is the scene set?

The scene is set in Chicago in 2035

Find the elements that are part of a futuristic environment? What can we consider as the most striking of these elements? What may be the film’s main theme?

The means of transport are futuristic, in particular the trains and some flying vehicles. The most striking elements are the robots which are everywhere: they can be considered as the most important elements in this scene. The place of robots in society may be the film’s main theme.

From these elements, give a definition of the science-fiction genre.

*This is an extract from a science-fiction film. Science-fiction is a genre of fiction whose works can be set in parallel worlds or in the future. Some of these works are related to reality while others are not, their authors often focus on technological progress and imaginary inventions. The science-fiction genre allows writers and film directors to express their views about what **may** happen in the future.*

II – Detailed comprehension. Watch the extract a second time and focus on the robots.

What are the robots doing in this scene?

Some robots are working; others are walking in the street or having a chat with people. One robot is delivering a parcel at the very beginning of the scene, another robot is walking dogs. The dustmen are robots. They are doing things that are normally done by people.

What are the human characters’ attitudes to them? Comment.

Most people are indifferent to them. Robots seem to have become everyday objects and are part of their lives.

However the main character isn’t indifferent and even has a negative attitude to them. He pushes away the robot that has come to deliver a parcel and, as he walks in the street, he looks at the robots sideways, as if he didn’t trust them or like them.

Pay attention to the video at the end of this scene. What is it and what does it tell?

*The video is an ad for a new generation of robots that **will** soon be available. It shows how robotics and artificial intelligence are constantly improved and robots upgraded.*

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III – Comment.

What are the film director’s intentions with this scene? (Think of his intentions with regards to the setting of his film, to the storyline and to the theme dealt with in the film.

*Through this scene the director first wants to introduce the futuristic environment in which the film is set. In his view robots **could** become day-to-day objects in the near future. They **could** take over certain jobs from human beings; in this scene they are jobs that do not require specific skills: low-skilled or unskilled work.*

*In the film director’s view, most people **will** get used to robots and accept them as part of their lives but some people, such as the main character of the film, **may** resent that situation.*

*This scene shows that technological progress, the development of AI **may** bring about social changes that some people **will** accept and some others **may** disagree with or feel ill-at-ease with. He hints at the social changes that **may** be brought about by technological progress and at the social tensions that this progress **may** give rise to.*

I, Robot is a film inspired by a collection of short stories also entitled I, Robot and written by Isaac Asimov. Isaac Asimov (a Russian-born American writer) is considered as one of the most influential science-fiction authors in the history of literature.

Vocabulary box

Everyday objects = day-to-day objects

To take* over (*reprendre*)

A skill = ability to do something

→ skilled / low-skilled (*ajout du suffixe “-ed” au nom pour former un adjectif*)

→ ≠ unskilled (*préfixe privatif “un-”*)

To get* used to = to become* accustomed to

To resent something = to feel* resentment about something

To bring* about ≈ to give* rise to ≈ to engender

To feel* ill-at-ease with ≈ not to feel* good about

Rappel grammatical - Emploi de la modalité pour parler du futur.

La modalité permet d’exprimer un avis sur la réalisation d’un événement, la possibilité ou la probabilité qu’un événement se réalise. Ainsi, elle permet d’exprimer le futur en anglais.

Différents auxiliaires de modalité expriment des degrés de certitude différents qu’un événement se réalise dans l’avenir :

- **COULD + BV** : certitude relative (traduit par un conditionnel en français : « il se pourrait que ») ;

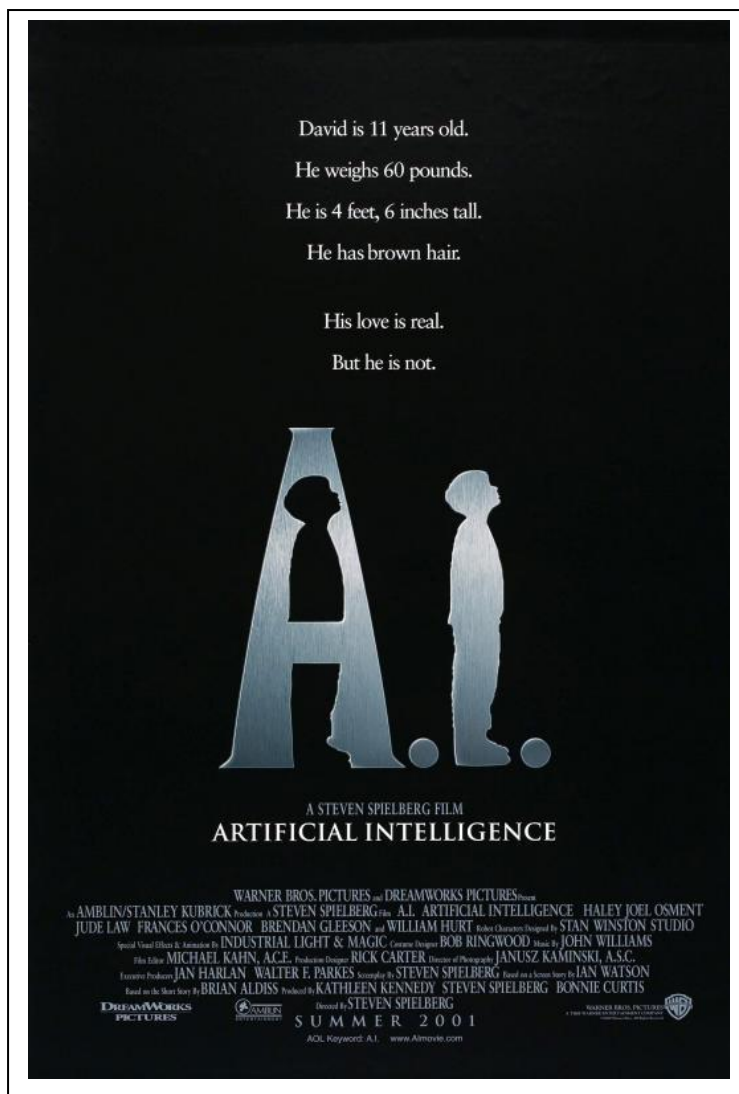
- **MAY + BV** : certitude moyenne (traduit par le futur accompagné de « peut-être » en français) ;

- **WILL + BV** : probabilité forte ; quasi-certitude ou certitude (traduit par un futur en français).

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Document 2: poster of *AI*, Steven Spielberg, 2001



Document 3: three extracts from the film.

<https://nuage05.apps.education.fr/index.php/s/Dd9Gn5HBYDGMHxt>

<https://nuage05.apps.education.fr/index.php/s/gp8TPNfJbw2zpgM>

<https://nuage05.apps.education.fr/index.php/s/d7QbFiJ3ttPgXgp>

I – Global comprehension.

From the poster explain what the film is about.

The film (directed by Steven Spielberg and released in 2001) tells the story of a robotic boy who looks like a real boy and has feelings like a real boy.

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Watch both extracts and take notes of the main events in order to give a short account of them.

*David, the robotic boy, is in a forest with old, broken, cast-off robots. They **are chased by** hunters who catch some of them to take them to a fair called “The Flesh Fair”. At this fair the robots **are destroyed** in front of an audience who are cheering as the robots **are being cut** into pieces, **burnt** with acid or **torn** apart. This fair **is referred to** as a “celebration of life” and **is meant to** celebrate humanity over artificiality.*

*One of the men in charge of the show wants to destroy David. However, as the robotic boy appeals for his “life”, some people in the audience shout for him **to be kept** alive.*

II – Detailed comprehension.

Watch the extracts again carefully, making pauses when you need to, and take notes to analyze the “Flesh Fair” and the film characters.

Guidelines:

- what can the “Flesh Fair” make the viewers think of and what does it imply about humanity? Explain the cue “History repeats itself” said by one of the robots.
- how are robots and humans characterized? Pick out screen shots to support your analysis (pause the video and take down the time when you see them).

*The “Flesh Fair” can remind the viewers of the Roman games as the setting looks like a Roman circus. It can also remind viewers of public torture and executions. This can explain the expression “history repeats itself” which **is used by** one of the robots. It implicitly refers to other times in history when categories of people, who **were considered** as threats or scapegoats, **were executed**. The Flesh Fair is called a “celebration of life” because robots, which are manufactured objects and as such are opposed to living beings, **are destroyed**. However what happens there is so violent and to some extent cruel that the expression “celebration of life” is ironic.*

*Many of the human characters **are shown** as monstrous, they **are portrayed** as brutal, ruthless, and seem to have no feelings. At times they hardly look human, for instance the hunters on motorbikes look more like robots than human beings, the musicians are wearing death masks, and the audience **is shown** as a mob, overexcited and thrilled at watching violence and destruction. However the audience’s attitude changes when David **is put** on stage and starts pleading for his “life”.*

*As for the robots, although they look like monsters with their broken faces and limbs, they look like gentle monsters. They are vulnerable, and their features and expressions convey feelings such as anxiety, fear, sympathy or even love. Thus, as they show signs of solidarity, they look more humane than most of the human characters, and the film director has the viewer sympathize with them. The character of David is so well-made that he looks like a real boy and **is put** on par with the little girl who notices him thanks to his teddy bear.*

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III – Comment.

Draw a conclusion as to the film director’s point of view on people’s perception of robots or artificial intelligence. From these extracts, what do you think is his own perception?

*The large majority of human characters **are portrayed** as being hateful of robots. Most seem to resent artificial intelligence and refuse technological progress. However the film director doesn’t consider that people are devoid of feelings: the crowd eventually turns against Johnson, the man who wants **to have David destroyed**.*

*Spielberg seems to support artificial intelligence as a form of art and art as the expression of what’s best in humanity (David is a robot but this character does look like a perfect little boy). This idea is conveyed through the character who admires David as a “remarkable” and outstanding creation, a sort of masterpiece, that should not **be destroyed**.*

What cultural reference does Steven Spielberg make at the beginning of the first extract? What literary work can it make you think of? In your view, why does he make this reference?

In the first extract, Spielberg refers to the Gothic genre with the strange and monstrous characters in a dark and creepy setting. It can make the viewer think of Frankenstein, a novel by Mary Shelley published in the early 19th century and often considered as the first science-fiction novel. This novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who artificially gives life to a creature made of the parts of dead people but who rejects his creature after it comes to life because of its monstrosity.

Vocabulary box

Cast-off = abandoned, no longer wanted

To be meant to = to be supposed to

To convey ≈ to communicate (*ici, faire passer*)

Ruthless = having or showing no compassion

A mob = a violent crowd

Humane = compassionate or benevolent

To sympathize with = to show compassion with

To put* on a par with = to consider equal to

To be* devoid of = not to have at all (*être dénué de*)

Outstanding = extraordinary

A masterpiece = an outstanding work

Rappel de grammaire – Formation et emploi de la voix passive

Formation : auxiliaire **BE** suivi du **participe passé** (éventuellement suivi de **BY** et du **complément d’agent**)

L’auxiliaire **BE** peut être à la forme de la base verbale ou conjugué

Emplois :

- Mettre en position de sujet (et donc en avant) un objet ou une personne, notamment parce qu’il subit une action ou est victime.
 - Ex : *The robots **are destroyed** and **are torn** apart.*
 - *The robots **are being chased** by hunters.*

- Exprimer une action dont on ne cherche pas à mettre l’auteur en avant ou dont on ne connaît pas l’auteur.
 - Ex : *The human characters **are shown** as monstrous.* (Dans ce cas, l’équivalent en français est souvent l’emploi de « on » à la voix active : « on nous montre les personnages humains comme étant monstrueux. »)
 - *People, who **were considered** as threats or scapegoats, **were executed**.*

- Un cas de passif particulier avec **la structure causative** (“*Have something done*” – équivalent du français « faire faire quelque chose » ou « faire en sorte que quelque chose soit fait » - dans ce cas l’auxiliaire BE est sous-entendu : “*Have something (be) done*”)
 - Ex : *Johnson wants to **have David destroyed**.* (Peut être traduit par : « Johnson veut que David soit détruit. »)