

Your favourite films and series – Where were they made?

A Before you read

We often go to the cinema to escape ‘real’ life. We get taken away by the action, whatever type of film we are watching. But is the action really taking place where we think it is?

Look at these pictures used in the *Harry Potter* films. Do you know what happens in the films at these places?



2. Find out where the photos were actually taken.

B Reading

It's not just in the *Harry Potter* films that the directors try to pull the wool over our eyes.

Admittedly, in certain films where the places don't actually exist, like in *The Hunger Games* or *Game of Thrones*, the directors search the world looking for the right places, so that the films' settings match the descriptions in the books. This could be seen as quite an enviable job – travelling the world looking for the right location that matches what people have imagined while being enthralled by a book.

There are many reasons why movies can't be filmed where they are supposed to be shot. Think about trying to film a scene in Times Square, New York, or Piccadilly Circus, London, or even in the centre of Berlin. What problems would it cause? Firstly, it depends on the time of day the scene needs to take place – sometimes early morning scenes or ones in the middle of the night might be easier, but they are still very busy places. Also, the cost involved in clearing the area for a few minutes of film must be carefully calculated or finding enough extras to fill the place and make the scene look authentic can cause a headache. Directors also have to think about how much of the background will actually be visible in the scene. Nowadays, many of these scenes can be shot in a studio with a green screen behind the action, so the correct backdrop can simply be added at a later date.

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On the screen it looks like a yellow cab is driving down a street in NYC, when it is really on the back of a lorry moving down the street but the rest of the action is filmed in a studio somewhere else.

20 Speaking of backgrounds, there is a building in Toronto which all tourists see when they take a bus tour of the city. It is called the Flatiron Building and is a triangular shaped structure which looks like an iron. As you can see from the photo, the building is very old and the buildings in the background are very new, which isn't always suitable for the film that is being made. This is no problem for filmmakers: the background is simply cut out or the scene is shot with a close-up
25 and has the Flatiron building in the background.

The streets around the building aren't as busy as they are around the famous Flatiron building in New York, which also makes filming in Toronto easier and cheaper. The two buildings look very different, but in films that isn't always important and so the one in Toronto is often used by filmmakers. These are just two of 20 Flatiron buildings that exist around the world and appear
30 not only in films but also in selfies of tourist's holiday snaps.



Flatiron Building, Toronto



Flatiron Building, New York

The Lord of the Rings, as most people know who have watched the films, was filmed in New Zealand. There is even a village, Hobbiton, that was especially built for the series of films and is now open to the public. It isn't always easy for the people who live in the places where films are made. There are always film crews around, road diversions, buildings suddenly appear that are
35 built just for the film or even a single scene, and then there are the tourists who visit these places when a film has become a blockbuster. On the other hand, all this fame means profit for the places used in films. The film companies pay vast amounts of money for the inconvenience that is caused while a film is being made; afterwards the tourists pay to stay in hotels and eat in restaurants or buy souvenirs and take photos so their friends will visit too.

40 As with films, TV series are also sometimes filmed on location. A favourite English TV series, which has also now been made into a film, loved by old and young around the world, is *Downton Abbey*. It is all about the Grantham family and their stately home in Yorkshire. Actually, the house that is used in the series is Highclere Castle, which is actually in the south of England, about an hour from London, in Hampshire. The actual location of the castle makes little
45 difference for most viewers. What counts are the emotions that are conveyed in the series and the tales that are told. And, of course, the location must match the era that the series portrays.

The marketing company involved in the *Harry Potter* films realised very early on that filming the books was going to mean big money. There are many websites that will help you find a 'Harry Potter holiday' location. They can tell you the places to visit that were used in the
50 different scenes in the films.

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They show you where to stand to get the best photos to match the scenes in your favourite film. They also give you extra information about the places so that you are completely informed and can tell everyone all the things you have discovered. It doesn't matter where in the UK you want to go on holiday, you are rarely far from some *Harry Potter* locations. If you haven't got enough
55 time, the best place to go is the *Harry Potter* film studios in Leavesden, just outside London (20 minutes by train and 15 minutes on the Knight Bus). Make sure you plan enough time to walk down Diagon Alley, take a selfie on the Hogwart's Express, look at all the props and costumes and have a well-earned Butter Beer.

Most authors can only dream of what good things might happen when they send a
60 manuscript to a publisher hoping to have it published. For example, Joanne K. Rowling's first publisher at Bloomsbury warned her that she wouldn't make much money from writing children's books. I expect he very quickly ate his words when the first book became a bestseller because he knew there were more books in progress. Then there were translations of the books, movies, merchandise, tourist attractions, etc., which all earned them a lot of money.

Even though there is so much technology which film directors can use today, people are
65 usually still the best actors and real places make the best backdrops. With the outbreak of the corona virus, filming of many movies around the world was stopped to prevent any risk to those involved: actors, extras, caterers, production crew, local people, etc. Although for some scenes backdrops and scenery could be built in studios, for other scenes some directors are still waiting
70 for the green light to be able to start filming again. This at least goes to prove that real places are still important for films.

C Comprehension

1. Why is looking for film locations an interesting job?
2. When is it best to film a scene in a busy place?
3. Explain why a green screen is helpful.
4. What buildings similar to the original are used in its place?
5. What are the benefits to building a film set at a certain location?
6. What is important if a different location is used? Think about *Downton Abbey*.
7. What makes you think the publisher didn't believe the *Harry Potter* books were going to be successful?
8. What is an advantage to films being made completely in a studio?

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D Looking at language

1. How many of these film words did you understand? Write definitions for the words you didn't understand and translations for the ones you did.

director: _____

location: _____

scene: _____

extra: _____

studio: _____

green screen: _____

action: _____

backdrop: _____

filmmaker: _____

close-up: _____

crew: _____

blockbuster: _____

props: _____

costumes: _____

manuscript: _____

2. Find these adjectives in the text and match them with their German meanings.

1) enviable (line 4)	a) <i>sichtbar</i>
2) enthralled (line 6)	b) <i>verdient</i>
3) authentic (line 13)	c) <i>beneidenswert</i>
4) visible (line 14)	d) <i>authentisch</i>
5) conveyed (line 45)	e) <i>interessant</i>
6) well-earned (line 58)	f) <i>begeistert, bezaubert</i>
	g) <i>übertragen</i>

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3. The author of the text uses some interesting idioms. What do they mean in 'normal' English in this context?

1. pull the wool over our eyes: _____

2. can cause a headache: _____

3. ate his words: _____

4. waiting for the green light: _____

E Writing

Choose the topic below which interests you more.

1. What can you find out about your favourite film? Where is it supposed to take place? Was it filmed in these places or similar ones? Do the places match those described in the book (if there is a book of the film)? What things do you think could have been filmed in better places? Research the locations used in the film. Write an article for your school magazine of about 150 words.

2. What places do you know that have often been used in films? If you don't know any, do some research on the internet. You may be surprised what you discover. Present your information to the class in groups of three. Each of you should talk for five minutes.

A Before you read

They are supposed to be

1. King's Cross Station
2. corridor at Hogwarts School
3. The Black Lake, Hogwarts
4. the viaduct Hogwarts Express travels over on the way to school

Actual places

1. St Pancras Station, London
2. Gloucester Cathedral
3. Virginia Water, Berkshire
4. Glenfinnan, Scotland

C Comprehension Questions

1. You can travel all round the world looking for the right place.
2. Early in the morning or in the night because fewer people are there.
3. You can film any scene and add the right background later.
4. It is easier and cheaper to film them.
5. It can be used very often in a film; it doesn't disturb anyone when it is used and can be open to tourists after filming.
6. It has to be in the right era.
7. He told Joanne K. Rowling to get another job.
8. If there are reasons filming has to stop at a location, filming can continue in a studio.

D Looking at language

1. Students write their own explanations (and translations)

2.

1. c) 2. f) 3. d) 4. a) 5. g) 6. b) There is no match for e)

3. Suggested answers:

1. make us believe something different
2. cause a problem
3. regretted what he had said
4. waiting for something to be allowed

E Writing

1. + 2. Here is a website that probably contains all the information and links your students will need: www.filmtourismus.de 