> *The executioner* (*El Verdugo*) is part of a collection of European films: the CinEd collection, a film education programme for young people.

> This student sheet allows me to rediscover the film, to go through it in words and images, to know more about where the characters live and their time, to create and invent, to go further by discovering other works: films, books, music, photographs, paintings...

*By participating in CinEd, I share the discovery of films with young people from other countries, all over Europe!*
The film

1. Seen in the film

CinEd — Student sheet

The executioner

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1. Seen in the film

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

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(8)

(9)

(10)
The film

A

The executioner

1

Seen in the film

(1) A prison guard interrupts his lunch to open the door to two funeral employees, José Luis and Álvarez, who bring a coffin.

(2) Carmen, the executioner’s daughter, invites José Luis to come in. They’re talking to Amadeo.

(3) During a lunch by the river, Álvarez told José Luis that he should get married.

(4) José Luis and Álvarez collect a coffin from the tarmac.

(5) After a marriage of “rich” people, the priest officiates the wedding of Carmen and José Luis while the altar boys remove the carpet and ornaments and the sacristan shuts down the candles.

(6) Amadeo, Carmen and José Luis visit the apartment under construction.

(7) José Luis, Carmen and Amadeo eat an ice cream in front of the administration building where José Luis has to go to get a job as an executioner, the only way not to lose the apartment. At first, he refused to enter, but Carmen and Amadeo convinced him.

(8) Amadeo and José Luis attend the Book Fair to get a recommendation from the academician Corcuera. Young people are looking for Bergman and Antonioni’s books.

(9) José Luis receives a mission order: he must exercise the death penalty. He wants to resign, but Carmen and Amadeo dissuade him by telling him that a pardon will probably be granted.

(10) The family arrives in Palma de Mallorca, among the tourists, the UN flag and a beauty contest. José Luis tries to flee when he sees the civilian guards waiting for him.

(11) In the prison kitchen, José Luis refuses to do his job. He asks to leave, he wants to go back to Madrid, he no longer cares about the apartment and wants to quit. Someone put a tie on him.

(12) On the pier, José Luis meets his family again after his first execution. He doesn’t want to do it again. “That’s exactly what I said the first time,” says Amadeo.

The film

A

2

Heard in the film

Civil server: Well, the time has come. The time for what?
José Luis: To act.
Civil server: What about the pardon?
José Luis: What pardon?
Civil server: Come on, let’s go.
José Luis: No, no, no.
Civil server: Where do you think you’re going?
José Luis: Where’s the door leading to the street? Tell me. I'm going to Madrid. I quit. I've waited long enough. If they want the apartment, they can have it. Where is the exit?

José Luis: He told me I could resign.
Prison governor: Go on.
José Luis: I can't be an executioner! I want to resign.
Prison governor: You'll lose the apartment.
José Luis: I don't care anymore. We'll live on the street. I want paper to write out my resignation.
Prison governor: One moment, please.
José Luis: I want to live in peace with my wife and child. Carmen is a good woman.
“The other topic, the serious one [...] is commitment; how easily people and contemporary society make commitments, how easily they lose their free will, their absolute freedom, their deepest selves, and become part of a system – to use a foreign expression that basically means ‘to do well for themselves’. In other words, it seems to be astonishingly easy for people to make the leap from freedom, the freedom to be themselves, to loss of freedom.”

Luis García Berlanga
The film and its era

Context:
As with all great works of art, *The Executioner* (*El Verdugo*) upholds deep-rooted universal values while remaining firmly anchored in its historical context. It was filmed in Spain, in 1963, almost 25 years into the Franco dictatorship. Franco came to power in 1939 after the Civil War between the republican troops and the rebel army, and his dictatorship lasted until his death in 1975. Based on a national-catholic vision of Spain, the dictatorship established a state based on military powers, with terror mechanisms legitimised by law: prison, torture and even the death penalty. The last sentences on political grounds were handed down in September 1975, giving rise to a wave of protests and condemnations within and outside the country. In March 1974, Puig Antich, aged 25 and accused of anarchism, was executed by garrotte in Barcelona.

As in many other European countries, the 1960s was also a period of industrialisation, involving a far-reaching transformation of society and the economy. Over 4 million people emigrated from the countryside to the peripheral zones of large cities. In the midst of this period of economic development, a "nice little flat" and a "nice little car" (as in Ferreri’s films) became the highest aspiration for most of the population, helping them forget the miseries of the regime.

I learn and I imagine

José Luis Rodríguez, two years earlier

- Imagine José Luis’ life two years before when the film starts.
- What was his job? What were his aspirations? What were his dreams? What did he expect from life?
- Write a presentation or story with the José Luis of the time as the main character.

What would you like to know about the death penalty?
You can find out when it ended in your country, the countries in which it still exists today, etc.
The film and me

Photographs in the style of *The executioner*:
Based on the blank and empty room that appears in the photogram and the visual references provided by Javier Rebollo in the notebook, create an image on an equally abstract space. You can explore a range of techniques: drawing, painting, photography, installation, etc.

I put images in interaction with one another:
Do these three images from *The executioner* make you think of other images you are familiar with? These can be other films, paintings, comics, photographs, video clips, advertisements, etc.

Choosing and creating images

I make my own poster of the film.

In the Young Spectator Space:
I choose the 10 images that have most marked, moved or affected me (whatever the emotion I felt). For example, I could trace a route through the spaces and situations where doors and doorways have a particular space.

I compose a series of images based on my selection. I can propose a visual poem mixing images and words.

To go further

If I liked *The executioner*, I might also like:

*Il posto* (1961, Italy)
by Ermanno Olmi
(FILM IN THE CINED COLLECTION)
A film showing Domenico’s first days in Milano and in the office where he starts working. There he steps into his adult life, he discovers the city and meets Magali…
The photographs of Nicolás Muller (Hungary, 1913-Spain, 2000),
After his exile in Paris in 1938 following Nazis’ occupation of Hungary, in 1947 Müller moves to Madrid, where he would portray different prominent intellectuals of his time. His is also an outstanding documentary photographer, with a strong humanist character and focused in the power of daily life, something that turned him into one of the greatest photographers in Spanish post-war. In his own words: “The artist who has a camera in his hands has a unique instrument to express his thoughts, his ideas. I think it means a certain obligation”.

The stories of Franz Kafka
(Prague, 1883-1924)
Kafka is one of the greatest writers in the XXth century. Very often his characters seem to be condemned for a reason unknown to them, waiting for a trial that never comes and struggling against faceless power, trapped in a network of incomprehensible and relentless bureaucracy. His stories and novels set a unique universe, that many consider nearly visionary. So much so that the name of Kafka generated the adjective “kafkiano” (as Spanish filmmaker Berlanga gave his name to berlanguismo), a Spanish word recognized by the Spanish Academic Dictionary as an adjective to define “absurd and distressing” situations.
The graphic humour of Chumi Chúmez (San Sebastián, 1927- Madrid, 2003)

"How hypocritical people are! He claimed he wasn’t broke and here he is."

The songs of Paco Ibáñez (1934)

Starting at a very young age, Ibáñez turned his music into a resistance and fight weapon, first in exile and later living and performing in Spain. He is a singer and songwriter very sensitive to poetry, able to add music to poems by authors such as Rafael Alberti, Luis de Góngora, Blas de Otero, Gabriel Celaya, Antonio Machado, Miguel Hernández, Luis Cernuda or Francisco de Quevedo.

"And we also suspended him from his position without compensation."

The author of this student sheet is A Bao A Qu.