

TEXT ONE

Vocabulary

>> Going through difficulties / Faring better

- To struggle (have been struggling)
- To make less revenue
- To look brighter
- Recovery
- the highest-grossing month
-

>> The cinema

- Theatres / cinemas
- a film / a movie
- a cinema chain
- to release a film / a film comes out
- to go on a wide release / to be released widely
- the theatrical window
- cinema-goers / the audiences
- to be available to stream
- to be due on the big screen
- to star in a film

>> General

- to lure / to have a pull
- data show that
- to join the picket line
- to lay bare why...
- the main reason for... lies ... (elsewhere)

Key sentences / ideas to be rephrased

“But the dash to streaming has been exaggerated: cinemas still have a pull”

“Films that go on wide release ... still as popular as before the pandemic. But there are fewer of them”

Plan

1/ Barbenheimer release seems to have “saved” the theatres

2/ What are the factors behind the crisis & recovery

- lockdown & streaming
- the necessity of wide release. They still work!

3/ Future prospects: still fragile

- very few blockbusters planned as opposed to pre-pandemic era
- the writers' / actors' strike could further weaken the industry

Realism with “Oppenheimer”, or escapism with “Barbie”?

The Economist, Jul 14th 2023 (extracts)

They make an **intriguing pair of rivals**: **he** in a dark suit and porkpie hat, **she** in a gingham dress and matching hair bow. **His domain** is a vast scientific-research facility in New Mexico; **hers** is a fluorescent-pink party house with a slide. **J. Robert Oppenheimer** (played by Cillian Murphy, an Irish actor) spends his days corralling the finest scientific minds in America to create a nuclear bomb—work a colleague calls “the most important fucking thing to ever happen in the history of the world”. **Barbie** (played by Margot Robbie, an Australian actress) may seem like she has the perfect life, but she has existential worries too. Do her friends and fellow dolls, she wonders, “ever think about dying?”

No recent **movie matchup** has been as **eagerly awaited** as “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer”. Released on July 21st in America and Britain, **the two films will serve as a test of whether viewers can be coaxed off their couches to return to cinemas**. The **incongruity in the films’ subject and tone** **has delighted the internet**. People have created **memes**, remixed the trailers into **jarring “Barbenheimer” hybrids** and debated whether to see the biographical drama or the fantasy comedy first.

The **brouhaha** is **partly a result of** the film-makers. **Christopher Nolan**, the writer-director of “Oppenheimer”, is the closest thing Hollywood has to a mad scientist. He shoots on film and mostly eschews computer-generated imagery, blowing up an actual Boeing 747 for a previous film. The nuclear reactions in “Oppenheimer” were also created by producing actual explosions (albeit not nuclear ones), brightened by aluminium and magnesium powder. His films toy with narrative conventions and tricky subjects, such as the unconscious mind and theoretical astrophysics. They have earned a combined total of around \$5bn in ticket sales; “Dunkirk”, released in 2017, is one of the highest-grossing films ever made about the second world war.

Greta Gerwig, the director and co-writer of “Barbie”, has her own large fan club. She started out in the “mumblecore” genre of independent film (so named for its focus on dialogue) but has since had hits with “Lady Bird” (2017) and an adaptation of “Little Women” (2019). Her work claims humbler gross ticket sales of \$300m. For “Barbie”, she has cited old Hollywood musicals and films about the afterlife, such as “Heaven Can Wait” (1943), as inspiration. (...)

The “**Barbenheimer**” rivalry **brings a more serious question** for the public: **whether to favour realism or escapism**. **As** war rages on in Europe, and countries including China and North Korea continue to develop their nuclear arsenals, the origin story of these weapons of mass destruction **may feel too real and raw**. “Oppenheimer” is not a film that will ease **viewers’ anxieties**. It **explores the physicist’s concerns** about the **horrifying power** of his weapon and other bombs; it also shows how the American government attempted **to silence him** when those opinions became politically unpopular. Oppenheimer has disturbing visions of the bomb’s victims **in excruciating pain**, their skin peeling. “Some people leave the movie absolutely devastated,” Mr Nolan has said. “They can’t speak.”

From Hiroshima Barbie Land

Ms Gerwig’s production is much more playful. She has described the set—which contributed to a global shortage of pink paint—as “**a dopamine generator**”. The film’s tone is **witty** and slyly self-referential: it pokes **fun** at Mattel, here run by a team of men, and the vexed history of the toys. (The Barbies mistakenly assume that all women revere them as role models.) It has the kind of plot that only makes sense if a viewer does not think about it deeply.

“Barbie” **recognises the alluring comfort of dream worlds**. At one point Weird Barbie, a doll that has been handed around and mistreated, offers Barbie a choice, symbolised by a high heel and a clunky Birkenstock sandal: “You can go back to your regular life, or you can know the truth about the universe.” Barbie chooses the stiletto and is quickly chastised. “You have to want to know, ok? Do it again.”

“Barbie” and “Oppenheimer” offer another version of the Birkenstock-stiletto dilemma. **History suggests more viewers will opt for escapism**. **During the Great Depression**, many of the highest-grossing films were musicals or historical epics. The same was true **during the second world war**. Movies that did broach the subject of conflict, including “Gone with the Wind” and “Sergeant York”, were often set in the past; those that were contemporaneous, such as “Casablanca”, tended to tell love stories rather than tales of grisly combat. In 1968, **at the height of the Vietnam war**, the biggest movie in America was “Funny Girl”. In 2007, **during the financial crisis**, it was a film from the “Pirates of the Caribbean” franchise.

David Thomson, another film historian and author, reckons that, at a time of economic strain, war and populism, viewers will not want to see a serious film as much as they will want to see a frivolous one. “Comedies have always done well at the movies,” he says, because they do “something that the movies were made for, which is to reassure people and give them a couple of hours of escape from pretty big problems.” Who wants reality when life in plastic is so fantastic? (719 words)

En dégageant le plan du texte encore plus clairement – qui sera en fait celui de la synthèse

The Economist, Jul 14th 2023 (extracts)

I/ AN INTRIGUING RIVALRY TURNED (INTERNET) PHENOMENON

They make an intriguing pair of rivals: he in a dark suit and porkpie hat, she in a gingham dress and matching hair bow. His domain is a vast scientific-research facility in New Mexico; hers is a fluorescent-pink party house with a slide. J. Robert Oppenheimer (played by Cillian Murphy, an Irish actor) spends his days corralling the finest scientific minds in America to create a nuclear bomb—work a colleague calls “the most important fucking thing to ever happen in the history of the world”. Barbie (played by Margot Robbie, an Australian actress) may seem like she has the perfect life, but she has existential worries too. Do her friends and fellow dolls, she wonders, “ever think about dying?”

No recent movie matchup has been as eagerly awaited as “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer”. Released on July 21st in America and Britain, the two films will serve as a test of whether viewers can be coaxed off their couches to return to cinemas. The incongruity in the films’ subject and tone has delighted the internet. People have created memes, remixed the trailers into jarring “Barbenheimer” hybrids and debated whether to see the biographical drama or the fantasy comedy first.

II/ DOES THIS ‘MATCHUP’ MAKE SENSE?

A) IT MAY BE EXPLAINED BY THE TWO FILM MAKERS’ POPULARITY

The brouhaha is partly a result of the film-makers. Christopher Nolan, the writer-director of “Oppenheimer”, is the closest thing Hollywood has to a mad scientist. He shoots on film and mostly eschews computer-generated imagery, blowing up an actual Boeing 747 for a previous film. The nuclear reactions in “Oppenheimer” were also created by producing actual explosions (albeit not nuclear ones), brightened by aluminium and magnesium powder. His films toy with narrative conventions and tricky subjects, such as the unconscious mind and theoretical astrophysics. They have earned a combined total of around \$5bn in ticket sales; “Dunkirk”, released in 2017, is one of the highest-grossing films ever made about the second world war.

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B) IT REFLECTS A QUESTION OF OUR TIME

The “Barbenheimer” rivalry brings a more serious question for the public: whether to favour realism or escapism.

ON THE ONE HAND REALISM

As war rages on in Europe, and countries including China and North Korea continue to develop their nuclear arsenals, the origin story of these weapons of mass destruction may feel too real and raw. “Oppenheimer” is not a film that will ease viewers’ anxieties. It explores the physicist’s concerns about the horrifying power of his weapon and other bombs; it also shows how the American government attempted to silence him when those opinions became politically

unpopular. Oppenheimer has disturbing visions of the bomb's victims **in excruciating pain**, their skin peeling. "Some people leave the movie absolutely devastated," Mr Nolan has said. "They can't speak."

From Hiroshima Barbie Land

ON THE OTHER HAND ESCAPISM

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III/ ESCAPISM IS LIKELY TO BE THE WINNER

History suggests more viewers will opt for escapism. During the Great Depression, many of the highest-grossing films were musicals or historical epics. The same was true during the second world war. Movies that did broach the subject of conflict, including "Gone with the Wind" and "Sergeant York", were often set in the past; those that were contemporaneous, such as "Casablanca", tended to tell love stories rather than tales of grisly combat. In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam war, the biggest movie in America was "Funny Girl". In 2007, during the financial crisis, it was a film from the "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise.

David Thomson, another film historian and author, **reckons that, at a time of economic strain, war and populism, viewers will not want to see a serious film as much as they will want to see a frivolous one**. "Comedies have always done well at the movies," he says, because they do **"something that the movies were made for, which is to reassure people and give them a couple of hours of escape from pretty big problems"**. Who wants reality when life in plastic is so fantastic? (719 words)

Working on an introduction

> EX 1 – Type St Cyr - ESC

Even before their incongruous simultaneous release on July 21, there was no escaping the massive promotion campaign and the tsunami-like Internet craze that built up around Greta Gerwig's Barbie and Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer. This news analysis / this factual article from **The Economist** assesses / examines / aims to establish which one of these two very different movies is more likely to win over viewers.

TEXT G

This is an editorial from the British daily newspaper ***The Guardian***

Title / Strong position / Critical of Cannes Festival

Vocabulary used, opinion clearly expressed (cf I 1; I11; I 17-18, conclusion) + use of modals cf last paragraph MUST

Vocabulary

>> The cinema

- traditional movie-going
- a three-year theatrical window (before going online)
- box-office receipts
- cinephiles
- cinema chains / cinema studios
- theatrical releases (*les sorties en salle*)
- streaming services / streaming platforms / digital disrupters

General

- to rail against sth (*pester contre*)
- to dwarf (*écraser / eclipser / rabougir*)
- it is understandable that...
- there are legitimate concerns that...
- to strike a balance

PLAN

I/ Unnecessary pessimism at the Cannes Festival

> very strict rules against films produced by streaming platforms at the prestigious French International film festival as opposed to other festivals

> and yet, the 2021 edition was a resounding success > the cinema is far from being moribund!!!

II/ Still, ***The Guardian*** grants that there are causes for concern in the face of power of streaming platforms

> during the pandemic, cinema studios all developed their streaming services

> the cinema chains and cinema lovers are afraid that / fear that the revenues from platforms (based on subscriptions) will overtake revenues from traditional theatrical release

> Remarks from Martin Scorsese in a new book: reproaches the streaming platforms with turning the movies into products to be consumed, dumping other content with them

> indeed, use of algorithms by platforms leads to production of specific films with high commercial potential (*formulaic genre*)

III/ However, things need to be qualified: call for a balance to be struck

> The Guardian shows that things are not black and white: Netflix produced Mr Scorsese's latest film!

> There needs to be a balance:

Platforms have to leave enough time for the movies to be seen in movie theatres

Traditional cinema and platforms can enrich each other

Vocabulary that can be used! Reproach / fear