

## BRITFILMS #10 – Accompanying material for media education

### AMY

Great Britain 2015, 127 min

FSK rating: 0

age recommendation: 13+

Language: English/English with subtitles in German or English

Director	Asif Kapadia
Cinematography	Matt Curtis
Editing	Chris King
Music	Antonio Pinto
With	Amy Winehouse, Nick Shymansky, Mitchell Winehouse, Raye Cosbert, Blake Fielder-Civil and others

#### About AMY

When Amy Winehouse died in July 2011 at the age of 27, the public was already quite familiar with the private life and personality of this talented artist. At every turn, the tabloid press observed and exploited her alcohol and drug excesses. Her personal scandals were just as famous as her music. In his documentary, film director Asif Kapadia traces the career of Amy Winehouse from her youth and makes a point of presenting a differentiated portrait. He combines present-day testimonials made by a wide range of Winehouse's friends and companions – from her ex-husband, manager, band mates to her father and friends – with existing archival footage, and together the commentary and images take on a new quality. The film starts with home videos and early TV interviews, but these are quickly displaced by paparazzi footage that clearly reveals the dark side of fame. The film shows how Winehouse's private life gradually became public and the consequences of such fame. At the same time, it underlines the importance of music to Amy Winehouse and how she used her music and lyrics to reflect on her life and personal problems.

The following worksheets will address

- the film's depiction of Amy Winehouse that stands in opposition to reports in the tabloid media
- how her lyrics as a direct process of an experience are integrated into the film
- the visual sources used in documentary films – and the ethical concerns that should be considered around this use

## **Publishing information**

Publisher:

AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater

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Photo credits: Prokino

(All stills are from the DVD of AMY, published in Germany by Prokino. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)

**Who was Amy Winehouse?**

How did the tabloid press regularly portray Amy Winehouse? In contrast, how does the documentary film AMY depict the singer?

<b>Amy Winehouse in the headlines</b>		<b>Amy Winehouse in AMY</b>
	↔	

From this, what would you say the director's attitude is towards Amy Winehouse?

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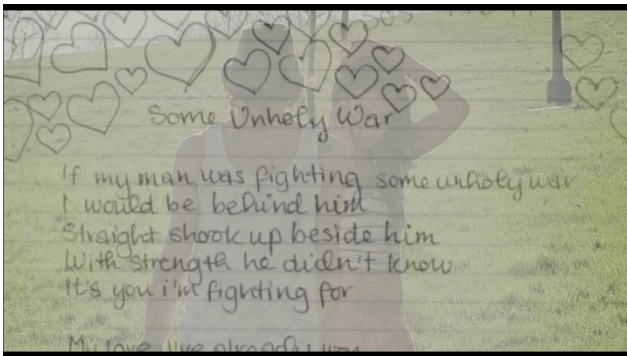
**AMY as a biographical reconstruction**

How is the documentary film AMY arranged? Divide the film into three large chapters. Choose what you think the guiding theme for each chapter is and, using key words, write down from which sources the visual footage derives.

	Guiding theme of each chapter	Source of the visual material
1		
2		
3		

### From life to song

Using the stills below explain how the image layout establishes a relationship between events in Winehouse's life and her song lyrics. (Picture 1 shows the lyrics to "Some Unholy War", and picture 2 the studio recording of "Back to Black".)



1



2

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### Success and pressure

Amy Winehouse	Success to me is not success to the record company or whoever. Success to me is having the freedom to work with whoever I wanna work. To always be able to just fuck everything off and go to the studio when I have to go to the studio. Or...
Tim Kash	But you can't do that. You have other responsibilities, you know. You are becoming an artist in the public eye. So all of a sudden you're gonna be... I'm not saying you're going to be hounded by the press, but you're gonna have certain responsibilities that you may not particularly welcome.
Amy Winehouse	That's cool but I think the more people see of me, the more they'll realise that all I'm good for is making tunes. So leave me alone and I'll do it. I will do the music. I just need time to do the music.

Amy Winehouse in an interview with TV moderator Tim Kash

This interview excerpt is shown about 30 minutes into the film AMY. Discuss

- in what way this excerpt anticipates later conflicts
- the attitude Amy Winehouse has here to her role as musician and how this changes

- how in this moment Amy Winehouse perceives the public and how this changes
- what fans can expect of musicians

**Visual footage**

Director Asif Kapadia never personally met Amy Winehouse. His documentary film was made after her death and thus the visual footage in the film is comprised almost entirely from “found footage” (that is, already existing material). The soundtrack however is taken from present-day interviews conducted especially for the film.

Name scenes that best illustrate the following image sources:

Home videos / private recordings	
Paparazzi videos	
Photos	
Clips from TV shows	
Clips from newscasts	
Clips from concerts	
Footage from other documentary films	
New footage	

Should visual footage from the sources named above be readily reused in a documentary film? In the classroom re-enact an editorial meeting with the filmmaker in which (media)-ethical concerns are discussed. Be sure to delve into the provenance of the visual footage as well as the privacy or private sphere of the person in question.

**The role of “home videos”**

Numerous scenes in the film, especially in the first half, are recordings made in the singer’s private surroundings and some are very personal. Note down together what scenes you can remember. Afterwards discuss with the class what this says about how we deal with media today: What is the meaning of such private videos? For whom are they intended? In what kind of environment are they shared? What happens when they are made accessible to others?