



School: 600

Subject: Stage 1 Modern History

Assessment Type: FOLIO TASK 4 – Historical Film Analysis (25% total grade)

SACE Registration Number:

**Task :** Students analyse the accuracy of historical accuracy of a film of their choice. They will consider the accuracy of the film in relation to historical evidence and events. They will use historical language to communicate informed arguments.

**What you need to do:**

1. View a film from the list provided.
2. Research the events and people of this time. **U&E2**
3. Consider the film for accuracy in relation to the evidence that you find. **A&E1**
4. Use clear and precise information from the sources to produce arguments.
5. Use of appropriate evidence from the sources in your answer.
6. Construct a film analysis using the SEXEXY format which argues if you believe the film is historically accurate, backing your statements up with evidence. **A&E1**
7. Cite your all sources using correctly formatted footnotes and bibliography. **A&E3**

Understanding and Exploration		Application and Evaluation	Analysis
<b>A</b>	Comprehensive understanding and insightful exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Perceptive application of the skills of historical inquiry to critically examine and evaluate sources and interpretations.</p> <p>Communication of well-reasoned, coherent, and insightful historical arguments, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
<b>B</b>	Some depth of understanding and thoughtful exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Thoughtful application of the skills of historical inquiry to examine and evaluate sources and interpretations.</p> <p>Communication of reasoned and coherent historical arguments, with some insights, and with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
<b>C</b>	Understanding and considered exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Application of the skills of historical inquiry to examine sources and interpretations, with some evaluation.</p> <p>Communication of generally reasoned and coherent historical arguments, with acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
<b>D</b>	Recognition and basic understanding of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Basic application of some skills of historical inquiry to select and use sources.</p> <p>Partial communication of a historical argument, with attempted acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
<b>E</b>	Awareness of one or more ideas, people, or events in history.	<p>Attempted application of the skills of historical inquiry to select and use one or more sources.</p> <p>Attempted description of a historical event, with limited or no acknowledgment of sources.</p>	

**Respond to the following:****“To what extent is the film *The Imitation Game* historically accurate?”**

In 2014, director Morten Tyldum premiered his film *The Imitation Game* in the United States. The film is set during three different time periods, but the main theme of the film is World War II, which occurs from 1939-45. Using characterisation, setting and the plot/events, Tyldum was able to create a historical film based on the real-life events of Alan Turing and his work on the Enigma machine. Due to the use of historically accurate use of events and setting, the film *The Imitation Game* can be considered historically accurate.

The film *The Imitation Game* follows the story of Alan Turing, an advanced mathematician and cryptanalyst who was hired to decipher the Enigma machine, the famous encryption machine that was used by the Germans in WWII to send coded messages. Enigma seemed unbreakable until Turing and his team gained access to German codebooks and were able to create a machine that could decipher to code. Turing is also played in the film as being homosexual, which was illegal at the time that the film was set. Set during the time of World War II, *The Imitation Game* incorporates many real events from the time, whilst also using the buildings that were used during WWII.

An important aspect of directing a historical film is recreating the events that happened in real life, with as much accuracy as possible. Tyldum was able to do this through the incorporation of large events that occurred during the time, which included the deciphering of the Enigma machine, and the conviction of Turing. In the film, World War II is in progress when Turing and his co-workers are hired to decipher the Enigma code, which changes each day. Turing was able to create a machine to decipher the Enigma, but only with the realisation that they could input words they already knew were going to be included in the message.<sup>1</sup> In comparison, although the machine that Turing created in real life had a different name than the name used within the film, the storyline surrounding the creation is very similar to real events.<sup>2</sup> When the team broke the code in the film, they decided to allow some attacks so that the Nazi's would not become suspicious.<sup>3</sup> This was also a real instruction from the administrative of the cryptanalyst team in World War II.<sup>4</sup> After his work for the government, Turing is depicted in the film as a homosexual which is revealed when investigated by policemen Nock and Staehl in 1951, when there is suspicion of Turing being a soviet spy.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this, Turing is convicted of gross indecency and undergoes chemical castration so that his work can continue. Within the film, it is projected across the screen that Turing committed suicide due to his government-mandated therapy.<sup>6</sup> In reality, although he was not investigated for being a soviet spy, Turing was investigated and convicted for his homosexuality.<sup>7</sup> Turing was found dead in his bed poisoned by cyanide, which is often attributed to be a suicide as a result of his hormone 'treatment'.<sup>8</sup> Although not absolutely accurate, Tyldum was able to create a historical film by accurately portraying historical events of World War II and Turing's life.

Another major film technique that is used to create historical accuracy is the use of appropriate settings. Tyldum was able to incorporate many settings that the actual events occurred in, to help further re-create the theme of the film. The film occurs through multiple timeframes, one of which is the period that Turing attends school. The flashbacks to adolescence, and the introduction to cryptology by his friend and first love Christopher, were filmed at Sherborne, in Dorset.<sup>9</sup> In comparison, they used the exact school

---

<sup>1</sup> - This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 01.11.04

<sup>2</sup> - HistoryExtra. (2019). *Alan Turing: The man, the enigma*. [online] Available at: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/alan-turing-the-man-the-enigma/> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>3</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 01.16.50

<sup>4</sup> En.wikipedia.org. (2019). *The Imitation Game*. [online] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Imitation\\_Game](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Imitation_Game) [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>5</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 00.05.30

<sup>6</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 01.44.25

<sup>7</sup> En.wikipedia.org. (2019). *The Imitation Game*. [online] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Imitation\\_Game](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Imitation_Game) [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. (2019). *Alan Turing | Biography, Facts, & Education*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alan-Turing> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>9</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 01.03.10

## STAGE 1 HISTORY

that Turing attended in real life, recreating scenes in classrooms that Turing was present in.<sup>10</sup> Another setting that was used throughout the film was Bletchley Park. Throughout the film the building that Turing and his team worked in to decipher the Enigma code and create 'Christopher' was Britain's top-secret Government Code and Cypher School, at Bletchley Park.<sup>11</sup> Source 1 shows the exterior of the building that was used to film the deciphering scenes in *The Imitation Game*, and although it is not Bletchley Park, it is visually very similar to the exterior of Bletchley Park (Source 2). The inside of Bletchley park also is seen during the bar scenes, filmed in the mansion's ballroom.<sup>12</sup> Comparatively, the building Bletchley Park is a 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion in Buckinghamshire that became the principle centre of Allied deciphering during World War II.<sup>13</sup> This demonstrates that Tyldum created high levels of historical accuracy through the use of buildings with historical relation to the events.



Source 1: Joyce Grove <https://spillwords.com/joyce-grove-nettlebed/>



Source 2: Bletchley Park <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bletchley-Park>

Conversely, the film technique that faults the historical accuracy of the film is the characterisation. Throughout the film, many characters are exposed to an exaggeration of characterisation to form a better storyline and create a more dramatized film. As Turing is the main character within the film, his personality and character are heavily exposed, and therefore Tyldum had to create a character that would make a better story. In the film it is depicted that Turing works alone to create the film as he is difficult to work with and feels that his colleagues are inferior. Joan Clarke, Turing's acquaintance says "You're going to need all the help you can get. And they will not help you if they do not like you".<sup>14</sup> Comparatively, Turing's character is actually heavily dramatized and in real life he was social and had more of a sense of humour. The team worked together to create the computer that decipher the Enigma Code, whilst Turing lead the idea behind it. Turing was also never disrespected like he was in the film and was however well-respected and considered one of the best code breakers at Bletchley Park.<sup>15</sup> The character of Commander Denniston (the official behind the cryptanalyst team) was also exaggerated and dramatized throughout the film to be 'strict' and 'the bad guy'. Denniston is played throughout the movie by Charles Dance, and is depicted to come into a number of conflicts with members of the cryptanalyst team. In one scene, Denniston is depicted to become quite hostile as a result of progress that Turing has made on his computer, in which he says, "Have you decrypted any German messages? A single one? Can you point to anything at all that you've achieved?".<sup>16</sup> This characterisation is however far from the truth, as his grandchildren state that his personality was not like this and he is depicted incorrectly throughout the film. They say: "While the much-acclaimed film *The Imitation Game* rightly acknowledges Alan Turing's vital role in the war effort, it is sad that it does so by taking an unwarranted sideswipe at Cdr Alastair Denniston, portraying him as a hectoring character who merely hindered Turing's work."<sup>17</sup> An incorrect portrayal of characters can have a large impact on the film as they can change the storyline and withdraw the significance of the historical events occurring during the film.

<sup>10</sup> The Worldwide Guide to Movie Locations. (2019). *Filming Locations for The Imitation Game (2014), in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset and London.* [online] Available at: <https://www.movie-locations.com/movies/i/Imitation-Game.php> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>11</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 00.46.39

<sup>12</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 01.02.05

<sup>13</sup> En.wikipedia.org. (2019). *Bletchley Park.* [online] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bletchley\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bletchley_Park) [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>14</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 00.46.28

<sup>15</sup> En.wikipedia.org. (2019). *The Imitation Game.* [online] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Imitation\\_Game](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Imitation_Game) [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>16</sup> This is a scene derived from the film: Film Nation Entertainment (Dec 2014) *The Imitation Game* 00.53.27

<sup>17</sup> Furness, H. (2019). *Bletchley Park commander not the 'baddy' he is in The Imitation Game, family say.* [online] Telegraph.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/11256888/Bletchley-Park-commander-not-the-baddy-he-is-in-The-Imitation-Game-family-say.html> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

STAGE 1 HISTORY

*The Imitation Game* was a film released in 2014 to recreate the historical events that occurred in England during World War II. The film follows a cryptanalyst team, specifically Alan Turing, and their efforts to decipher the famous German Enigma code. Although there is an inaccurate portrayal of characters throughout the film to dramatize the storyline, Tyldum is able to use settings of high historical relation to the event and accurately portray the events that occurred in England during the World War II. The use of events and settings combine to prove that *The Imitation Game* has a high extent of historical accuracy.