

Getting started

In pairs. Which genres of film do you watch regularly? Make a list. Why do you like them?

Master of Suspense

Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980) was a film director for 60 years, and many people think that he was the UK's best ever film director. Hitchcock's nickname was 'The Master of Suspense'.



In *Psycho*, a secretary steals a lot of money from her boss and runs away. She stops for the night at an isolated, frightening hotel.

40 The young owner of the hotel is insane, and he murders her in the shower. This famous 'shower scene', and the film's ending, were shocking at the time because they were so violent and disturbing.

Hitchcock was born in the last year of the 19th century. In those days, films were black and white, and silent. Hitchcock's first job in the film industry was as a set designer when he was 20, but he wasn't a set designer for very long. Five years later, he was a director. Hitchcock's tenth film, *Blackmail* (1929), was the first British 'talkie', or film with sound.

Hitchcock's films were dark, psychological thrillers. From the 1930s to the 1960s, they were very popular in the UK and the USA. Their plots were gripping and there was often a surprise ending. One of the main characters was usually a beautiful, but mysterious, blonde woman. Hitchcock's use of the camera was very clever, and his soundtracks were atmospheric and frightening.

Hitchcock is famous for appearing as a character in his films, but only for a few seconds. When people watch a Hitchcock film they often try to find him. In *The Birds* (1963) he is walking some dogs in the street, in *Strangers on a Train* (1951) he is trying to push a musical instrument on to a train, and in *Dial M for Murder* (1954) he appears in a photograph!

Two of Hitchcock's most famous films, *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds*, were horror films. They weren't easy films to watch. Audiences in the 1960s were shocked by them.



45 In *The Birds*, birds start to attack people in a small town in California. Nobody knows why they start to behave in such a strange way, and the plot never explains it. The people in the town hide in their houses, but the birds can break the doors and windows...

Check

3 Choose the correct answer. [P]

- Hitchcock's first job in films was as...
a an actor. b a designer. c a director.
- His films are...
a exciting thrillers.
b romantic costume dramas.
c hilarious comedies.
- His films often have frightening...
a casts. b music. c special effects.
- Hitchcock often appears in his films...
a in long scenes. b at the end.
c for a very short time.
- Psycho* is about...
a ghosts. b a murderer.
c a broken shower.
- The plot of *The Birds* is...
a frightening and mysterious.
b gripping and funny.
c informative and realistic.

Reading

- 1 3.15 Listen and read the text about a famous film director. What genres of film did he direct? What are the names of some of his films?

Vocabulary

- 2 Find the expressions in the text which mean:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1 assassina | 4 apparire |
| 2 comportarsi | 5 soprannome |
| 3 proprietario | |