



## **Activity – Vespa and Cinema**

The following three examples will explore material from films that contributed to the popularity of Vespa over time.

### **1. La Vespa in Famous Films**

From its birth onwards, the Vespa scooter has had a main role in many famous films, as explained in the following passage:

*“La silhouette morbida e inconfondibile della Vespa ormai non è solo un fatto commerciale, diventa storia di costume documentata dalla sua presenza anche nel mondo del cinema. Vanno in vespa i paparazzi della “Dolce vita” di Federico Fellini e molti registi del neorealismo italiano danno allo scooter un posto di prima fila nei loro film [...]”*<sup>1</sup>

After translating the passage above, find (some or all of) the following films and spot the Vespa moments!

- “La Dolce Vita” (1960) by Federico Fellini
- “Rocco e i suoi fratelli” (1960) by Luchino Visconti
- “Absolute Beginners” (1986) by Julian Temple
- “Good Morning Vietnam” (1987) by Mitch Markowitz
- “The Talented Mr. Ripley” (1999) by Anthony Minghella
- “American Pie” (1999) by Alan Hertz
- “Respiro” (2002) by Emanuele Crialese
- “The Interpreter” (2005) by Sydney Pollack
- “Paprika” (2007) by Satoshi Kon
- “Ratatouille” (2007) by Pixar Animation Studios
- “The American” (2010) by Anton Corbijn

Once you’ve seen clips from some or all of the films listed above (you can easily find them on Youtube), try to answer the following questions:

1. What is the most striking impression about Vespa you get from these clips?
2. How has the Vespa been used symbolically in films?
3. Do you think Vespa still is more than a means of transportation? How and why?
4. Do you get the impression that the image of Vespa in films has changed radically through the decades? If so, how?

### **2. “Roman Holiday” (1953) by William Wyler**

a) Watch the famous movie clip with Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn riding a Vespa around Rome (available on Youtube).

b) Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

*“Quello che però diede notorietà imperitura alla Vespa fu la lunga sequenza di Gregory Peck e Audrey Hepburn a zonzo per la capitale in “Vacanze romane”. Con tanto di lezione di scuola guida da parte dell'affascinante giornalista americano Joe all'imbranata principessa*

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<sup>1</sup> From Marinacci (2006:83).



Anna. *I due attori in sella allo scooter finirono anche nei manifesti del film, con in bella mostra il marchio Piaggio. Impossibile calcolare il valore commerciale di una simile pubblicità.*”

1. How and why do you think this movie sequence contributed to the success of the image of Vespa?
2. Until recently, scooters were not that popular in the UK or the USA . But somehow the older generation could always associate Vespa with Italy. How would you explain it?

### 3. “*Caro diario*” (1993) by Nanni Moretti

a) Watch the first of three sections (called “*In Vespa*”) of the film “*Caro diario*” and see if you can answer the following questions:

1. What does the main character (Moretti) say is the thing he likes the most (min. 4:15, 5:45, 15:02)?
2. What is the relationship between the main character/narrator (Moretti), the Vespa and the landscape/the city (Rome)? What is the meaning of roaming around the street of Rome?
3. Why is Vespa so central to the film?
4. How do the long shots in the film capture the “spirit” of Vespa (for example, min. 11:00-12:45 and 21:22-25:20) in your opinion?

b) Here is an article (in English) to see how a journalist explains why this is one of his favourite films: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/dec/21/caro-diario-dear-diary-moretti>