

BRITFILMS STUDY GUIDE: SUBMARINE

Great Britain 2010, 97 min

German certification: minimum age 12,
recommended for 14 years and over

director	Richard Ayoade
script	Richard Ayoade
cinematography	Erik Wilson
editing	Nick Fenton, Chris Dickens
music	Alex Turner, Andrew Hewitt
featuring	Noah Taylor, Paddy Considine, Craig Roberts, Yasmin Paige, Sally Hawkins, Gemma Chan and others

What SUBMARINE is about

Oliver Tate is 15 years old, thinks like an intellectual and is terribly melancholy. Sometimes he imagines how the whole world would mourn his death – and yet he knows full well that this will only ever be a dream. Because more than anything, Oliver is an outsider. Nonetheless he thinks he has a chance with his schoolmate Jordana. And when a sort of relationship does in fact develop between the reserved, pensive boy and the silent girl, he seems to have got a little closer to growing up. His own love-life is contrasted, however, with the rather sad marriage of his parents, especially since his mother has apparently become interested in the new neighbour, a loopy New Age guru. Thus Oliver soon has to worry not just about himself, but also about restoring the peace at home.

In atmospheric images, and with offbeat humour, the British comedian Richard Ayoade recounts the crisis of identity of a boy who longs to be unique, but who is, first and foremost, insecure. Despite the bizarre cast of characters, Ayoade always manage to get very close to the wishes and worries of his protagonist. Even if Oliver often expresses it more long-windedly, the main question which motivates him is: who am I? And what is to become of me?

The following worksheets focus on

- Oliver's development in the course of the film
- Oliver's struggle with his identity
- the self-referential elements with which Oliver perceives his life as a film

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Photo credits: Kool Film

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

Coming of age

The following stills show the first and last shots of SUBMARINE.



*Most people think of themselves as individuals, that there's no-one on the planet like them. This thought motivates them to get out of bed, eat food and walk around like nothing's wrong.
My name is Oliver Tate.*

Describe briefly what Oliver is thinking at the beginning of the film, and what he has learnt about himself at the end of the film.

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Explain how this development is represented in the language of film. Compare in particular the setting and the field sizes.

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Identity

The first shots show Oliver at the beach.



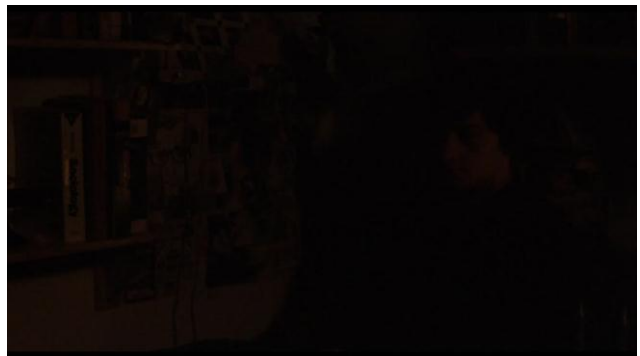
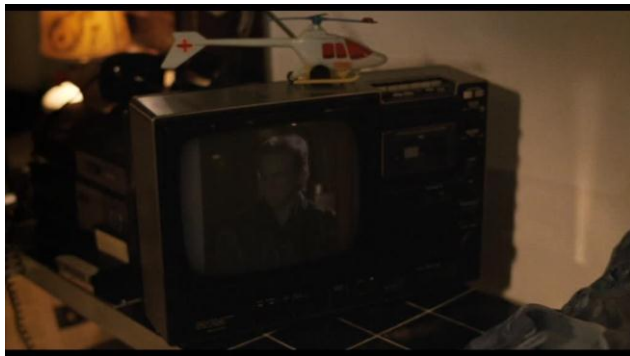
Formulate three questions which Oliver could be asking himself at this moment.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Describe the images. What is unusual about these portraits? How do they illustrate Oliver's thoughts?

What symbolic meaning does the sea have in this scene?

Film within a film (example 1)



I wish life could be more like American soap-operas. Then, whenever things got dramatic, you could just fade the picture down and pick things up again later.

What do you learn from this scene about how Oliver perceives his life?

Why does this scene have such a comic effect?

What desire is really concealed behind Oliver's comparison? Think of a different way to express this.

Film within a film (example 2)



Sometimes I wish there was a film crew following my every move. I imagine the camera craning up as I walk away. But – unless things improve the biopic of my life will only have the budget for a zoom out.

What feeling is, in Hollywood films, normally associated with the kind of elaborate crane shot Oliver wishes for? At what point in a film is this normally deployed?

Why does this scene have such a comic effect?

What desire is really hidden behind Oliver's comparison? Think of a different way to express this.
