



SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION

1980s Cinema: Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst

By Adam Pepper

Session 1



Welcome to Session 1 of this '1980s Cinema: 'Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst' course!

Over the next ten weeks, we will journey through over 20 years of cinema to find the secrets behind some of the most iconic, ground-breaking, popular and culture-changing stories and movies from this, the cheesiest and most action-packed of all decades!

We will study the directors, writers, actors, stories and history of the time to uncover how the 1980s created such a shift in film and storytelling, and gave us some of our most iconic film stars and characters.

We will look at their beginnings, their inspirations and the news they lived through to chart a path to some of the greatest and most rewatched films ever made.

Session 1:

In this first session, we will explore post-1960s/70s life in the USA.

After such a tumultuous 20 years, with its political corruption, assassinated leaders, hollow foreign wars, drugs, hippies, free love, space travel and exploding youth culture, the cinema goers of the 80s were maybe looking for something else.

Hope? Fun? A smile? Better hair?

Out went the gritty gangsters from Scorsese's streets, and in came plucky boxers, top TV comedians and superheroes!

No more anti-heroes eating canoli.

No more anti-war protests.

With a new President in office, with classic Hollywood chops of his own, maybe now was the time to tell stories in a more colourful and positive manner.

Let's begin...

Useful information for Session 1:

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Wilson Reagan (February 6, 1911 – June 5, 2004) was an American politician and actor who served as the 40th president of the United States from 1981 to 1989. He was a member of the Republican Party and became an important figure in the American conservative movement. His presidency is known as the Reagan era.

Born in Illinois, Reagan graduated from Eureka College in 1932 and was hired the next year as a sports broadcaster in Iowa. In 1937, he moved to California where he became a well-known film actor. During his acting career, Reagan was president of the Screen Actors Guild twice, from 1947 to 1952 and from 1959 to 1960. In the 1950s, he hosted *General Electric Theatre* and worked as a motivational speaker for General Electric.

Reagan's "A Time for Choosing" speech during the 1964 presidential election launched his rise as a leading conservative figure. After being elected governor of California in 1966, he raised state taxes, turned the state budget deficit into a surplus and implemented harsh crackdowns on university protests. Following his loss to Gerald Ford in the 1976 Republican Party presidential primaries, Reagan won the Republican Party's nomination and then a landslide victory over President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 presidential election.

In his first term as president, Reagan began implementing "Reaganomics", which involved economic deregulation and cuts in both taxes and government spending during a period of stagflation. On the world stage, he escalated the arms race, transitioned Cold War policy away from the policies of *détente* with the Soviet Union, and ordered the 1983 invasion of Grenada. He also survived an assassination attempt, fought public-sector labour unions, expanded the war on drugs, but was slow to respond to the AIDS epidemic.

Richard Pryor

Richard Franklin Lennox Thomas Pryor Sr. (December 1, 1940 – December 10, 2005) was an American stand-up comedian and actor. Known for reaching a broad audience with his trenchant observations and storytelling style, he is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most important stand-up comedians of all time. Pryor won a Primetime Emmy Award and five Grammy Awards. He received the first Kennedy Centre Mark Twain Prize for American Humour in 1998. He won the Writers Guild of America Award in 1974. He was listed at number one on Comedy Central's list of all-time greatest stand-up comedians. In 2017, *Rolling Stone* ranked him first on its list of the 50 best stand-up comics of all time.

Pryor's body of work includes numerous concert films and recordings. He won the Grammy Award for Best Comedy Album for *That Nigger's Crazy* (1974), *Is It Something I Said?* (1975), *Bicentennial Nigger* (1976), *Richard Pryor: Live on the Sunset Strip* (1982), and *Richard Pryor: Here and Now* (1983). He is also known for *Richard Pryor: Live & Smokin'* (1971), *Wanted: Live in Concert* (1978), and *Richard Pryor: Live in Concert* (1979). Pryor served as a co-writer for the Mel Brooks satirical western comedy film *Blazing Saddles* (1974).

As an actor, he starred mainly in comedies. He gained acclaim for his collaborations with Gene Wilder, including the films *Silver Streak* (1976), *Stir Crazy* (1980), *See No Evil, Hear No Evil* (1989), and *Another You* (1991). He also acted in films such as *Uptown Saturday Night* (1974), *Blue Collar* (1978), *The Wiz* (1978), *California Suite* (1978), *Superman III* (1983), *Harlem Nights* (1989), and *Lost Highway* (1997). He appeared as himself on *Sesame Street* and *Saturday Night Live* before hosting *The Richard Pryor Show* (1977), and *Pryor's Place* (1984).

Films to look out for:

The Godfather (1972)

Rocky (1976)

Kramer vs Kramer (1979)

Ordinary People (1980)

Stir Crazy (1980)

The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

The Blues Brothers (1980)

