

Juno (Jason Reitman 2007))

Knowledge Organiser

Institutional information	
Director:	Jason Reitman
Written by	Diablo Cody
Production company:	Mandate Pictures; Mr. Mudd
Distributed by:	Fox Searchlight Pictures
Starring:	Ellen Page, Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman
Genres:	Teen; comedy-of-age; drama; comedy
Awards recognition:	Nominated for 4 Academy Awards, including Best Actress for Ellen Page, Best Picture, Best Director for Jason Reitman. Won Best Original Screenplay by Diablo Cody.

Context:

Made for a reported budget of \$6.5-7.5 million, the film made over \$230million worldwide.

Along with KNOCKED UP and WAITRESS, JUNO was another film released in 2007 films about women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Jennifer Garner accepted a lower salary than usual to prevent the film from exceeding its budget.

Cody collected stories of adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents, including that of her then-husband, an adoptee who reunited with his birth parents after she wrote the film.

Much of Juno was based on Cody's own high school experiences: She dated a tic-tac-loving boy, she was best friends with a cheerleader and she used a hamburger phone identical to the one that appears in the film.

She also found inspiration in the story of a close friend who had become pregnant in high school and used details of her experiences, such as mistreatment from an ultrasound technician.

In 2008, after 17 students under sixteen in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Time magazine named the "Juno Effect", for glamorising teenage pregnancy.

Narrative (The method and means by which you construct the events of a story into a plot)

Narrative viewpoint:	Teen POV, young adult POV.
Narrative structure:	Linear narrative, three act structure, the seasons are used to illustrate and act as metaphors for the chapters in her pregnancy.
Binary oppositions:	Create conflict. Key oppositions in this genre are typically teenagers vs. their parents, though in this film the Maguffs are broadly supportive of Juno. She does quarrel with Bren and Bleerker's mum however.

Characters

Juno Macguff:	An intelligent, precocious, single-minded teenager, Juno is quick-witted, with an acerbic tongue and her use of sarcasm and snappy dialogue marks her out as being an especially unique character.
Paulie Bleeker:	In many respects the opposite of Juno; a much shyer, reserved person who is perhaps somewhat under the control of his mother. Also intelligent and ambitious-dedicated to his running and ultimately, Juno.
Vanessa Loring:	We are introduced to Vanessa as a very formal and almost person who is clearly desperate to have a child. Through various scenes we witness how natural she will be as a mother and that the breakdown of her relationship is no cause for her to stop wanting a baby of her own.
Mark Loring:	Generally regarded as a selfish and somewhat immature character who doesn't consider the feelings of others. His character development is interesting in that he seems to be a slightly different person each scene he's in, owing to the pressure of situation he's under causing him to behave in a variety of ways including a worryingly comfortable relationship with Juno.
Leah:	Juno's best friend and her rock throughout the film. She has her own opinions about what Juno should do, but besides learning that she likes older men, she is developed much as a character beyond the stereotypical 'best friend' role.

Author and title	Specialist writing A [Adapted from The Filmmaker's Eye: Learning (and breaking) the rules of cinematic composition by Gustavo Mercado, 2010	Specialist writing B [Adapted from Studying American Independent Cinema (pp. 18-19), by Rona Murray, 2011, Auteur]	Specialist writing C Juno - Get Real * (Excerpt) Jim DeRogatis, Chicago Sun Times, January 2008)
------------------	---	--	---

Summary	Anything and everything in a shot is there for a reason and therefore important. Every shot matters, even if it doesn't seem to at first glance.	Independent films are different from mainstream films from major Hollywood studios. Audiences expect this and it means that 'Indie' films can do things that are unique in their story, style or purpose.	The film is not as good as others say. Teenagers do not talk like Juno and others in the film, Juno would make better decisions than have unprotected sex and the only honest (genuine) character is Mark.
---------	--	---	--

Key quotes	<p>"...anything and everything that is included in the composition or frame of a shot is there for a specific purpose."</p> <p>"The framing of a shot conveys meaning through the arrangement of visual elements."</p> <p>"Every shot counts no matter how inconsequential it may seem."</p>	<p>"...something that strays artistically from the norm ."</p> <p>"...independent cinema does not need to adhere to generic patterns..."</p> <p>"...challenges this cinematic form artistically and looks to create something individual in either its aesthetics or its ideological viewpoint, or both."</p>	<p>"The notion that kids — even smart and sarcastic ones — talk like Juno is a lie..."</p> <p>"Are we really supposed to believe that a girl as intelligent... neglects to bring birth control?"</p> <p>"...simplistic and insulting caricatures drawn by screenwriter Diablo Cody."</p> <p>"Bateman's Loring actually can be seen as a more honest..."</p>
------------	--	---	---

Themes/issues.	
Teenage pregnancy:	The key narrative element; Juno's unplanned pregnancy is the inciting incident for the film and something which every character in the film is affected by. The representation of Juno and her pregnancy are handled in a very positive way, with Juno being a mature and intelligent woman who takes charge of her own destiny.
Adults vs. teenagers:	Generally, this theme is seen throughout teen films in the form of conflict. In JUNO, we see that the adults, the Maguffs and the Loring, are broadly not involved in conflict with the teenagers. Instead, we do see some individual scenes involving Juno and Mark Loring, Bren Maguff and Paulie's mum. In this way, it's somewhat different to other teen films and reflects how single-minded Juno is and how the film isn't as concerned with what adults say and do.
Coming-of-age:	Coming-of-age is a theme that shows a teenage character maturing or growing up in some way during the course of a film. The use of a 3 or 5 Act structure is usually employed to help show the development of a character's personality. In JUNO, we see this most notably through Juno who, whilst mature at the beginning of the film, takes responsibility for her actions and is much more honest about her feelings towards Bleeker by the end of the film. We also see her consider the nature of love and relationships beyond platonic friendship and casual sex, suggesting a sense of achieved maturity after the birth of her child.
Love:	A classic theme which is seen in various ways in the film; the romance between Juno and Bleeker, the platonic love between Juno and Leah, maternal love as demonstrated with Vanessa and the unborn baby as well as the paternal love between Mac and Juno.
Consequences:	Consequences refer to the idea of one thing leading to another; in the case of Juno, the consequence of her having unprotected sex with Bleeker is her pregnancy. Other significant consequences include Mark's reluctance to have a baby resulting in divorce with Vanessa and Juno seeing Vanessa in the mall having the consequence that Juno decides to continue with the adoption despite the separation of their marriage.
Selfishness vs selflessness	Throughout the film we see examples of Juno acting in a selfish manner, whether that means pouring slushy into Bren's vase to spit her, her use of Mark as a way to comfort herself, her apparent use of Bleeker for sex or her nature in trying to handle things by herself. Other characters such as Mark are also somewhat selfish in their overall nature, but the adults are generally seen in the film as somewhat more selfless and wanting to help others. By the end of the film we see a Juno who is much more selfless, suggesting a growth and a maturity that was absent at the start of the film.

Key scenes	
AUTUMN: The opening scene http://bit.ly/junoks1	An establishing shot of Juno, THE chair and her house. The text on screen says Autumn and instantly tells the audience that the film will not only be split into 4 distinct sections but that the seasons are metaphorical for Juno's experiences in the next 9 months. The extreme long shot also features warm, ambient lighting and the overall appearance is that this is a welcoming scene that suggests the protagonist is alone, isolated and in some way connected with the props and location she shares the shot with. The close up of her face after this shot shows that Juno is confused, concerned or just deep in thought and the jump cut to the next scene, her and Bleeker just before they had sex, is inside, lit differently and shot from an entirely different perspective. These combine to make clear that this is a memory and is a direct, engaging way to open the film.
The Abortion Clinic http://bit.ly/junoks2	Teen pregnancy is a subject that other films have dealt with before openly discuss abortion as an option. Even in this film, Bren cannot bear to utter the word abortion later on and it's interesting to see then that we get an entire scene taking place both outside and inside of an abortion clinic. Outside the clinic, Su Chin protests and presented in an isolated way, standing alone. Juno briefly stops and chats but then proceeds to the clinic, also looking alone and isolated. Inside, the clinic is drab, the colour palette emphasising the lack of natural light. The receptionist is shot from a high-angle and Juno eventually leaves of her own volition, highlighting her power in the situation. The montage of extreme close-ups of others in the clinic is an interesting use of cinematography and editing to show Juno's discomfort in the situation.
Meeting the Loring http://bit.ly/junoks3	First seen in montage, Vanessa is shot through a variety of tight close-ups that focus on her hands, adjusting and making her home seem more presentable. The montage is intercut with a montage of Juno's van passing large, imposing but impressive houses. Any one of these takes as individual shots show how large and impressive the houses are in scale compared to Juno and her van, suggesting a sense of superiority. The similarity of the houses also suggest the people inside are somewhat similar and lack personality or the individualism that we see in Juno. Interesting to note that there is a lot of foreshadowing used in this scene in relation to the Loring's relationship. For example, Vanessa opens the door alone and Mark doesn't come into the scene immediately. His reticence over the situation is clear; note his performance and the use of composition to help highlight this.
Juno tells Leah http://bit.ly/junoks4	The first shot is an ECU of Juno's fingers on the phone, indicating her anxiety about making the call, we then see Juno standing up, whilst Leah lies down showing how relaxed she is. Leah then sits up and the CU allows us to see her reaction to the news & to make clear their bond, Juno is seen in the next shot in a very similar manner in terms of composition-in the centre of the frame, shallow focus and facing broadly towards the camera. Both bedrooms are excellent in offering ideas relating to the characterisation of both people and offer insights into generic conventions and character types.
The Loring's Divorce http://bit.ly/junoks5	One of the more literal visual ideas in the film: when the Loring's are discussing their divorce, Vanessa sits at a table alone, emphasising her loneliness and foreshadowing her future. She sits opposite an empty chair, symbolic of the lack of a father-figure that Mark represents. There is the use of a table runner as a prop which also acts as a divider across the table, making clear that the couple are now strictly divided. Later in the scene, Mark joins the scene, but never sits at the table, indicating how he is no longer part of this family.

Key vocabulary						
composition	semiotics	rebellious	adolescent	irresponsible	disparaging	verbose
mise-en-scene	symbolic	arrogant	distant	acerbic	contemptuous	palaverous
cinematography	visual metaphor	sarcastic	sophisticated	altruistic	idiosyncratic	periphrastic