

2027:

NO CHILD HAS BEEN BORN FOR 18 YEARS

HE MUST PROTECT
OUR ONLY HOPE

Clive Owen
Julianne Moore
Michael Caine

Children of men

a film by Alfonso Cuarón

a film by Alfonso Cuarón

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Children of Men (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006)

This film is set in a world where **no child has been born for nearly 20 years.**

The impact on society is very serious. As one character says:

“As the sound of the playgrounds faded, the despair set in. Very odd, what happens in a world without children's voices.”

- What do you think this means? Write a few ideas about what you think would happen “in a world without children’s voices.”



Watch the opening scene, up to the title card, then answer these questions.

1. What is the big news?
2. Did you hear any other clips of news items?
3. Why is Diego Ricardo known as “Baby Diego” even though he’s 18?
4. What is the reaction of the people in the café?
5. What does London look like in 2027? Note 3 interesting details.
6. What do we learn about Theo, the main character?

(Bonus question) Comment on how the camera behaves.

Things we notice in the first scene:

- Long shots
- Details in the background – voices, images
- A messy, tired world
- A film full of interesting details in the background

After watching the first 20-25 minutes of the movie:

1. Give a summary in 5 bullet points of the events so far
2. List three things about this world that you noticed in the background
3. List three more things we have learned about the main character, Theo, or any other character.



CULTURAL CONTEXT

Questions on **Cultural Context** – the world of the film

In the clips we have seen:

1. Who has power? How is that power used?
2. Are people united or divided? What different groups or kinds of people are there?
3. What do people feel strongly about?

What does this still tell us about the world of the film?





- Xenophobia
- Heavy police presence
- Run-down, gritty

Children of Men

- **Refugees ('Fugees)** – the government treats refugees as criminals and locks them in gigantic camps. Jasper makes a living smuggling marijuana into Bexhill, a refugee camp near his home.
- **The Fishes** – a rebel army that wants equal rights for immigrants.
- **The Human Project** – a secret organisation of the best scientists in the world, devoted to discovering a cure for infertility.
- **Quietus** – a government-sponsored suicide kit.



Symbolism and Art

- Theo visits his friend Nigel, who is Minister of Art.
- The government has priceless artworks from around the world, such as Michaelangelo's *David* and Picasso's *Guernica*.
- Nigel mentions that Michaelangelo's *Piéta* was destroyed before they could take it from the museum.



The *Piéta* shows Mary mourning her dead son Jesus – holding him in her arms like a baby.

Towards the end of the film we see a scene that looks like to keep an eye out for it.



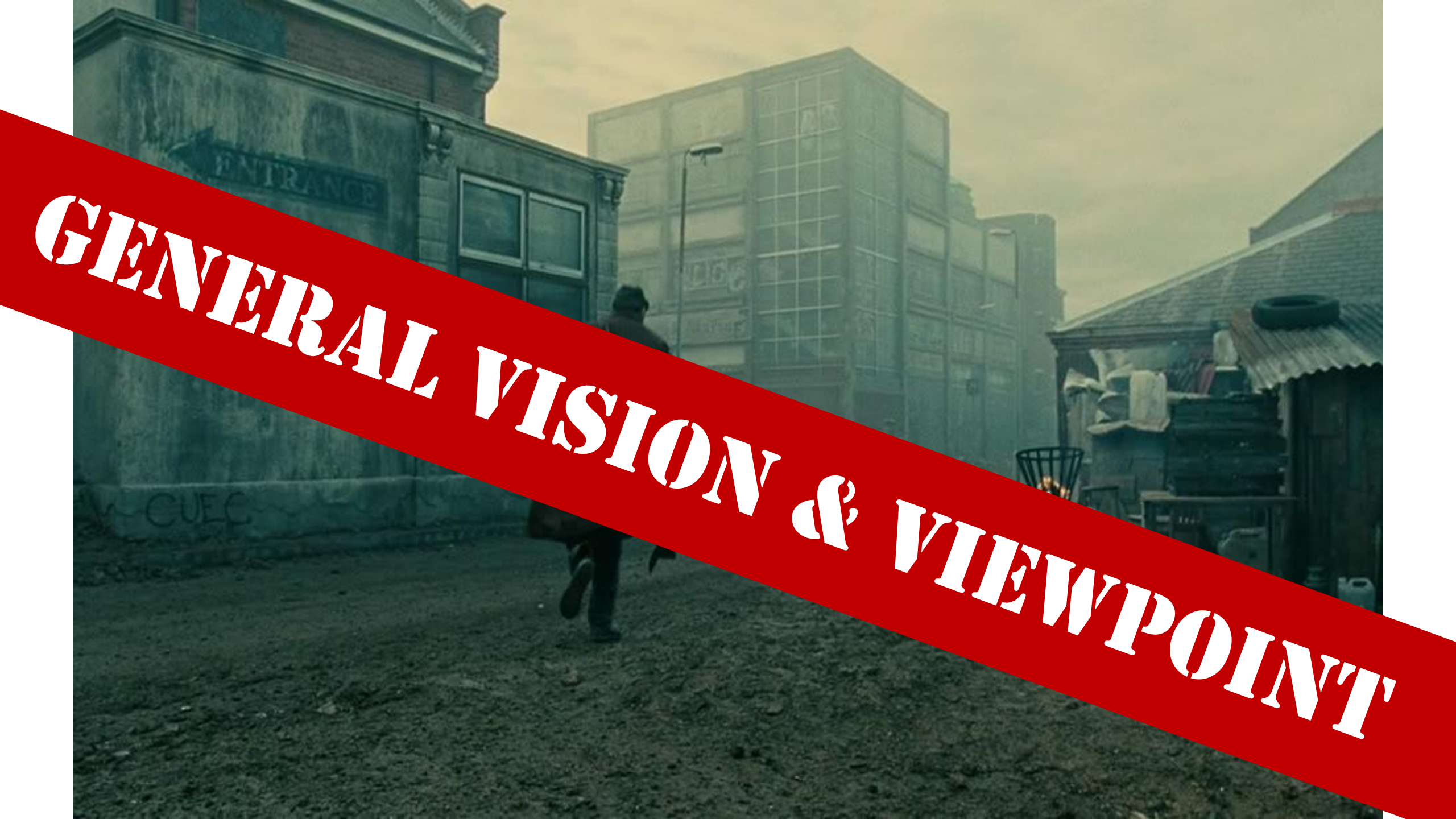
- Picasso's *Guernica* depicts people and animals being killed by fire-bombs in Guernica, Spain in 1937.
- This bombing was carried out by Nazi German planes allied to the Spanish fascists.
- This was part of the Spanish Civil War in which the fascists killed around 200,000 civilians.
- Events paralleling this happen later in the film. Keep your eyes open for them.

Irony is when things turn out differently from how we expected. In other words, irony is when our expectations are subverted.

- Can we think of any ironies in this film? Was there anything that upset your expectations?

Irony is when things turn out differently from how we expected. In other words, irony is when our expectations are subverted.

- Kee's pregnancy is a source of hope. Theo – and Theo's whole world – need that hope.
- People in Britain have been locking up 'fugees.' But the first woman to become pregnant in 18 years is a refugee. This means that the last hope of humanity has to live on the run.
- This world is so messed up that what should be a source of hope is a source of conflict.



GENERAL VISION & VIEWPOINT

General Vision & Viewpoint

We must here think about the **discourse** of the film: what the director is trying to say.

- How the director uses the techniques of cinema to influence how we feel – eg, camera angles, cutting, editing, filters, lenses.
- How the director places emphasis on particular details in each scene.
- How the crew have designed the props, costumes and setting.
- The mood of the film – optimistic, pessimistic.

Shot: an uninterrupted series of frames between cuts.

Long shots are hard to stage, but can give a feeling of being part of the action.

Short shots can give a sense of speed and urgency.

A long shot:

The camera follows a character moving through a scene. We see what they see, as they see it.

Short shots:

A foot
hits the
gas.

A car
speeds
away.

Another
car speeds
after it.

The driver
glances
behind.

Long shots in *Children of Men*:

1: When the car suddenly comes under attack and Julian is killed.

"We had 12 days to do the car attack scene. 10 days into it, we they were still staging it. After 12 days, we were going to lose the location. Day 11 came and there were accidents, and we could only do 2 takes a day.

On the last day, we knew we were losing location next day. In the morning it was great, but an operator fell down so we only had only one more shot. We were shooting the last take, everything goes great, but then by accident the blood spills onto the lens.

I yelled cut, but there was an explosion and nobody heard me so they kept shooting. Then, later, I realized that the blood splash was the miracle in that scene."

Alfonso Cuarón, director



Long shots in *Children of Men*:

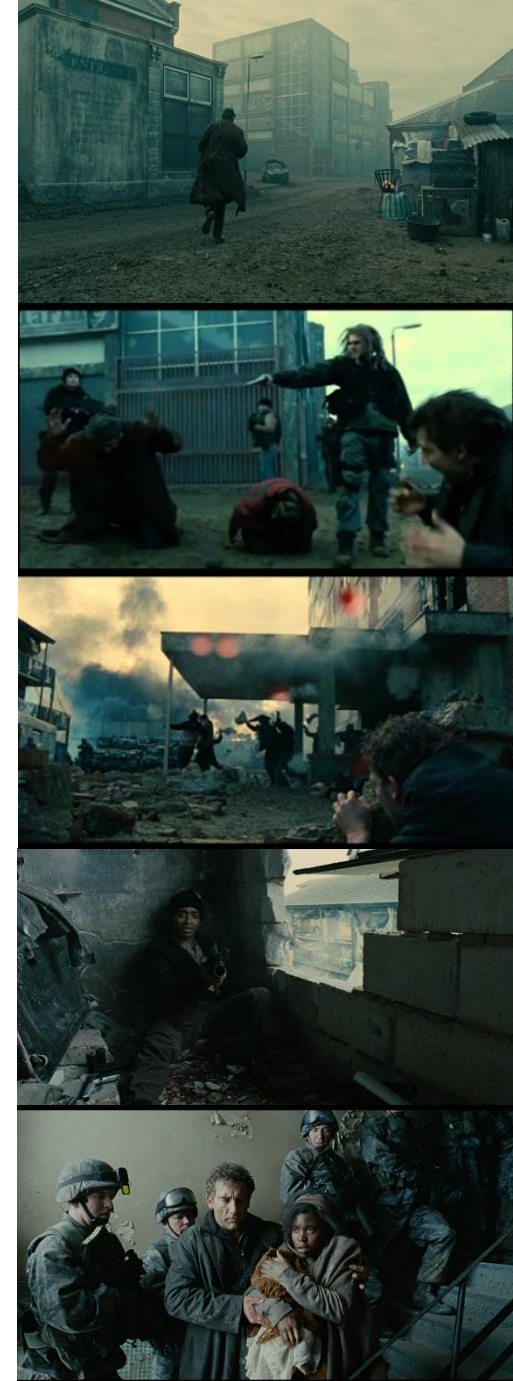
2: During the Uprising:

- Marichka and a Russian friend are bringing Theo and Kee to a boat.
- The Fishes attack them and abduct Kee.
- Theo makes his way through a terrible battle to sneak into a tower block and search for Kee.
- He finds her and they escape from Luke.
- As they go downstairs, people see the baby and the fighting stops.

...All in one shot!

It took 14 days to prepare.

Clive Owen (Theo): 'Right in the thick of it are me and the camera operator because we're doing this very complicated, very specific dance which, when we come to shoot, we have to make feel completely random.'





Did anyone catch the moment
inspired by Michaelangelo's *Pieta*?



Did anyone catch the moment
inspired by Michaelangelo's *Pieta*?





Did you see anything in the movie that was connected to Picasso's *Guernica*?



Did you see anything in the movie that was connected to Picasso's *Guernica*?

- Fascism, violence, oppression
- Rebellion
- The planes bombing Bexhill at the end

The general vision and viewpoint in *Children of Men* is not entirely grim and negative. Can anyone think of happy moments in the film?



The general vision and viewpoint in *Children of Men* is not entirely grim and negative. Can anyone think of happy moments in the film?

- When Julian and Theo are joking around in the car.
- When Jasper hosts Kee, Theo and Miriam at his house. They have a long conversation, laughing and enjoying themselves.
- When Kee and Theo shelter in a house with some Russians before going to find the boat. An old lady sings to the baby while feeding orange slices to Kee. Marichka plays with the baby.



Identification:

Identifying with a character means seeing the world of the film from their point of view.



1. In cinema, what is **identification**?
2. Who do we identify with in this film?
3. What is a **shot**?
4. List 2 happy moments or scenes in *Children of Men*.
5. Describe two **long shots** in *Children of Men*.
6. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a **long shot**?
7. Explain briefly what **discourse** means in cinema.
8. What symbolic meaning does **either** A) The piéta **or** B) Guernica have in *Children of Men*?

“Children of Men: Don’t Ignore the Background”

Watch the video essay and answer the questions that follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-woNImVcdjc>

1. What 2 things does Cuarón contrast?
2. What does the camera repeatedly do?
3. What effect does it have when the camera shows us things the main character doesn’t see?
4. What real events does the narrator compare the film to?
5. What art works does the film refer to?
6. How does Cuarón bring high art “down to the street”?
7. How does the idea of “not ignoring the background” relate to the themes of the film?

What is a **climax**?

The climax of a story is the most tense, exciting part. It is usually near the end.

The climax of *Children of Men*:

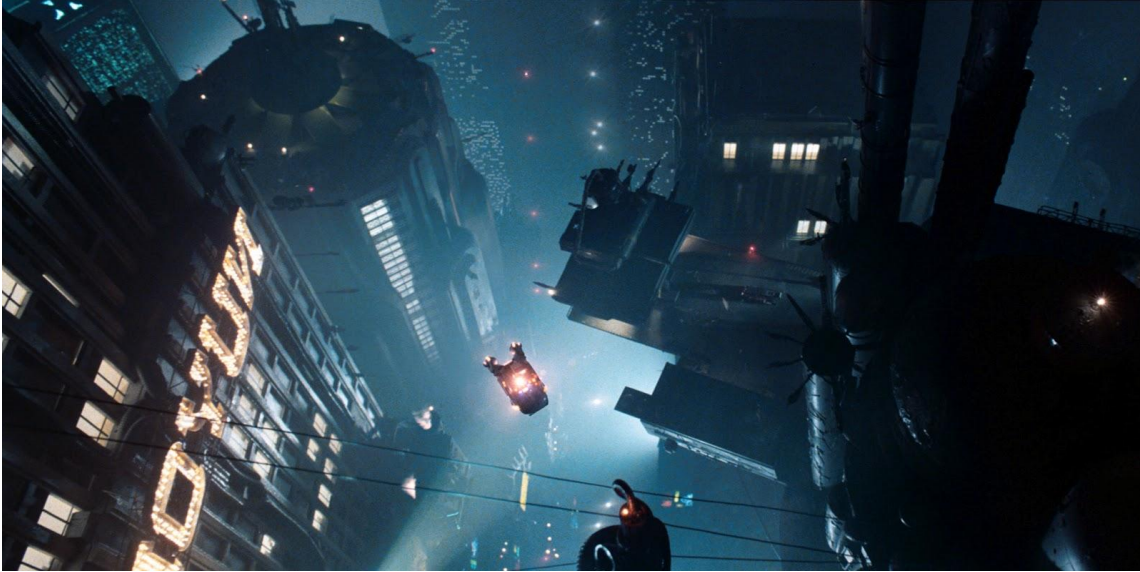
- Kee, helped by Theo and Marichka, is in Bexhill, a town turned into a giant refugee prison camp.
- She must get her baby to the Human Project boat, the *Tomorrow*, which will pass at sunset.
- A gigantic rebellion has begun in Bexhill, and the Fishes, a rebel group who are looking for Kee, have entered the camp.





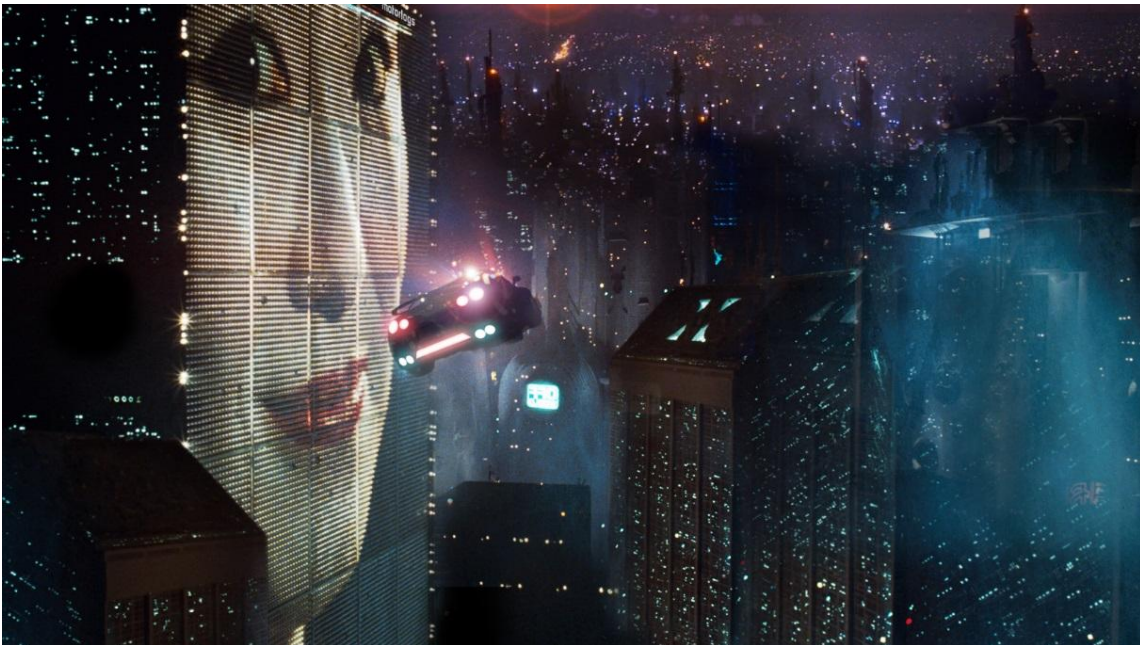
GENERAL VISION & VIEWPOINT

Literary Genre



Blade Runner is a 1982 science-fiction film that heavily influenced many films that came after.

Watch some clips from *Blade Runner*, then **write a short paragraph** comparing *Children of Men* to *Blade Runner*.



In what ways are they similar and in what ways are they different?



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