

O Sangue by Pedro Costa

Portugal - 1989 - 98 min



STUDENT
SHEET



> O Sangue (Blood) is part of a collection of European films: the CinEd collection, a film education programme for young people.

> This student sheet allows me to rediscover the film, to go through it in words and images, to know more about where the characters live and their time, to create and invent, to go further by discovering other works: films, books, music, photographs, paintings...

By participating in CinEd, I share the discovery of films with young people from other countries, all over Europe!

- A** The film
- B** In Europe and elsewhere
- C** The film and me
- D** To go further

A

The film

1

Seen in the film



O Sangue

CinEd — Student sheet

A

The film

1

Seen in the film

(1) Vicente and Nino live with their father, who is often away, for medical treatments.

(2) One night, after the eldest brother Vicente makes a mysterious trip to the pharmacy, the father disappears.

(3) The brothers must make changes in their lives and adjust to living without a father.

(4) On Christmas Eve, Vicente learns that their father is in debt and that two of his creditors want their money back at all costs.

(5) Their uncle arrives from Lisbon and, not knowing where his brother is, tries in vain to bring Nino back to Lisbon with him.

(6) Once the outside threats cease, a new family takes shape: Nino, Vicente, and Vicente's girlfriend Clara.

(7) One summer evening, the young couple goes for a walk in the park. The uncle uses the opportunity to kidnap the sleeping Nino.

(8) When his brother disappears, Vicente goes to see his uncle to demand an explanation, but is kidnapped and held captive by his father's creditors.

(9) Vicente must convince the woman in the gang to free him on New Year's Eve so that he can try to save his brother.

(10) Nino, however, who is acting more and more like an adult, doesn't need help. He escapes from his uncle's and returns home in a boat.

A

The film

2

Heard in the film

Vicente: Do what you want with me.
What do I tell Nino?
Father: That I'm dead.

« The night was dark and moonless /
A wolf howled in the distance /
Arh wooooo." »
Nursery rhyme (off)

A

The film

Clara: Changing your life: step one. Cut your hair, change your face.

Uncle: What are you writing?

Nino: The prices. When I leave, I'll pay you back.

Uncle: Don't you like fish? Your brother would kill me if he could.

Nino: You're lucky.

Uncle: Do you realize what you're saying? You're to blame for the way I am.

Nino: Vicente.

Uncle: I wanted to help you! Try to understand!

Nino: We don't need help.

2

Heard in the film

Nino: When the cloud passes, close your eyes. Look at the sun now.

Vicente: What's wrong with him?

Nino: He changed completely.

A

The film

3

Said about the film

« I edited O Sanguê. It was an enriching experience at the time. Pedro Costa and I were friends at film school and we had fun together. It was his first film, with all the stress and the whimsical and eureka moments that involves. [...]

We studied how we could connect the images together on one hand, and then connect these to the sound (music, dialog) on the other, as if we were returning to the source and reinventing everything. [...]

Writing Pedro's first film, and a part of his characters and his work on ellipsis, has lived on in our movie making and is visible in the more recent films. »

Manuela Viegas (the film's editor)

A

The film

3

Said about the film

« One of my first memories of O Sangue are the night scenes at Valada do Ribatejo on the Tagus river. It was miles away, and we made the return trip every day. It felt like an eternity, as if time had stopped. [...]

At the time, we gave little attention to sound when we shot a film. All that counted was getting the image right, and in the first few minutes, Pedro displayed a real obsession – a positive one, for the image itself, its texture and its density.

I also remember how surprised I was by Pedro's kindness and patience with Nuno Ferreira (Nino); he understood that Nuno was a child that needed to be drawn into his film. It's still a sign of perseverance in Pedro, who, despite problems on set, has always defended his project against anything and everything. »

Pedro Caldas (sound engineer)

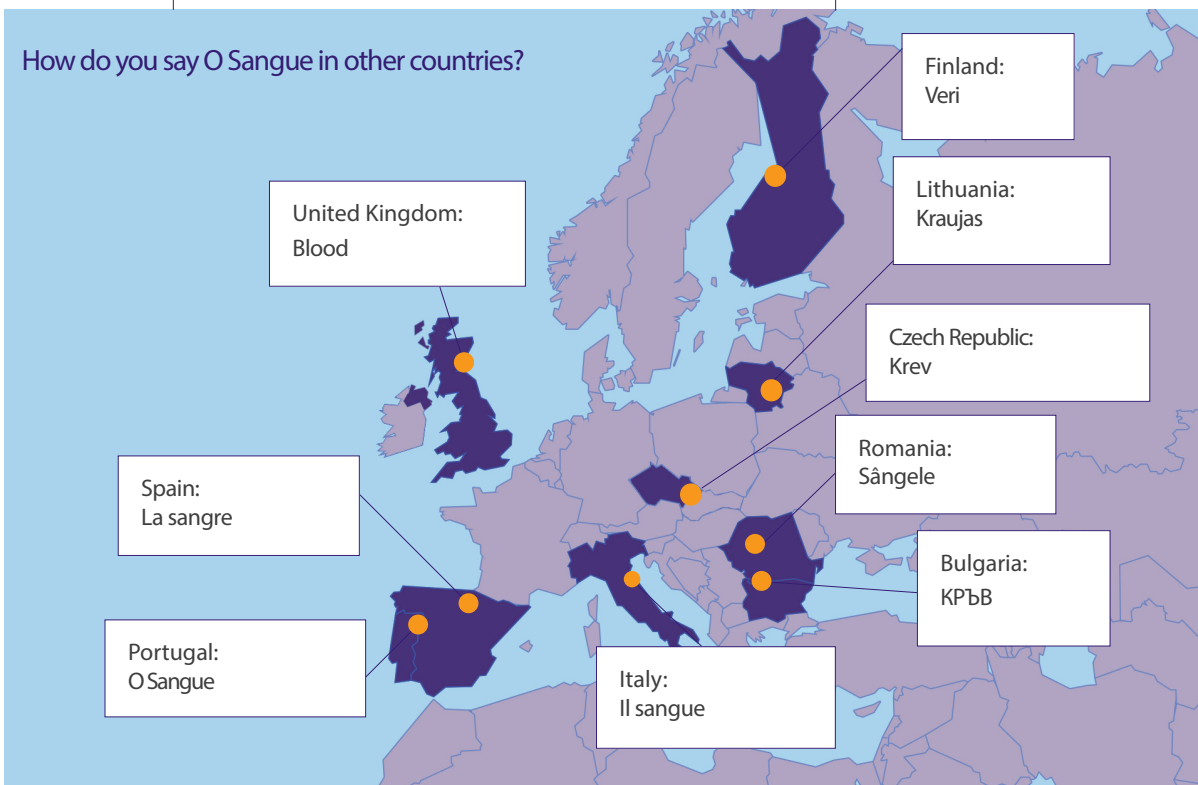
B

In Europe and elsewhere

1

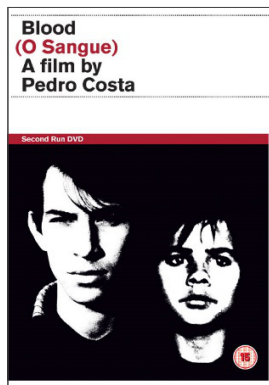
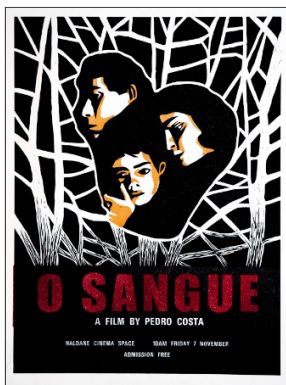
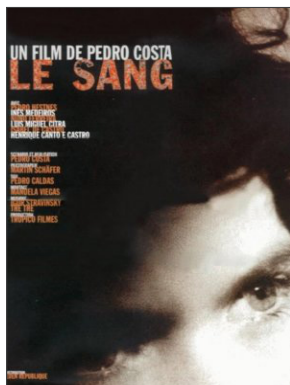
A film, several titles

How do you say O Sangue in other countries?



In Europe and elsewhere

The film and its era



French, Scottish and English posters

Context - 1989

The 1980s were a time of major change in Europe. The Berlin wall came down in 1989 and led to the reunification of Germany. This historical event marked the end of the Cold War that had divided capitalist and communist countries in Europe and around the world since the end of World War II. Several revolutions began in the East, announcing the end of the Soviet empire in 1989, which led to the breakdown of the USSR.

In 1984, Portugal was forced to accept a second round of financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In 1986, Portugal joined the European Economic Community (EEC).

O Sangue takes place over the course of these two years of change and disruption to the country's economy. This is perceptible in the characters' money problems: the little that they have, the father's debts, and the money offered by the uncle which Vicente and Nino refuse. In one scene, Nino notes down the the prices of things in order to pay his uncle back. His refusal to be assisted was seen as a metaphor of Portugal, forced to accept outside financial aid at the time.

In Pedro Costa's film, the huge gap between the modern areas of Lisbon, where the uncle lives, and the more simple, rural suburbs where the main characters' family comes from, is also symbolic of a country, Portugal, undergoing a complete economic overhaul.

The film and me

I learn and I imagine

- ▶ If you could give the film a different title, what would you choose?
- ▶ Nino talks about man's greatest invention: what is it?
- ▶ Continue writing the essay Nino prepares for his teacher Armada, which begins with: "A man with a thermometer in his hat..."
- ▶ What else would you like to know about Portugal, Lisbon and the places where the film takes place?
- ▶ All we see in the last scene of the film is Nino's face – not what he is looking at. Try to imagine what he sees.

Dear Pedro...

Write a letter to the director, Pedro Costa, to tell him what you thought of the film:

- ▶ what you liked, and what you didn't like, for example. Ask questions about what you didn't understand.
- ▶ You can also tell him what you'd do differently if you were the director.

C

The film and me

2

Choosing and creating images

- ▶ I create my own movie poster.
- ▶ What parts of the film surprised me the most ?
- ▶ In the young spectator space, choose the images that match those moments. Place them in the right order and add a title under each one.
- ▶ In the young spectator space choose the 10 images that touched you/affected you the most.
- ▶ The last image of the film shows only Nino's face – not what he is looking at. Try to imagine what he sees.
- ▶ What parts of the film surprised me the most? In the young spectator space, choose the images that match those moments.



Young Spectator Space
cined.eu/en/youngsters-space

D

To go further

In the young spectator space, watch cross-thematical videos from O Sangué in the educational films "At the table", "Conflicts" and "Escaping", and the different approaches to this same theme in other scenes.

If you liked O Sangué, you may like this other film in the CinEd collection:

- ▶ The Spirit of the Beehive
 (El espíritu de la colmena,
 1973, Spain)
 by Víctor Erice
 (CINÉD COLLECTION FILM)

Like O Sangué, this is a film about a family undergoing major change. While in the Portuguese film the father figure is absent, in the Spanish film it is the mother, trapped in memories of the past, who grows distant from her husband and two daughters, Ana and Isabel. Set in Spain during the dictatorship of General Franco, the story is a dreamlike fable about growing up.



To go further

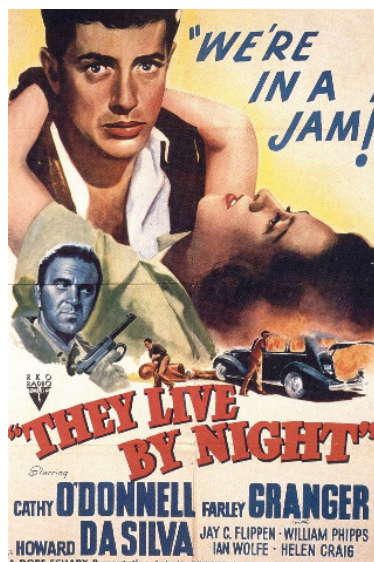


◀ The Night of the Hunter (United States, 1955)
Charles Laughton

This is a dream-like tale about a twisted and manipulative criminal (played by Robert Mitchum) who pretends he is a pastor with the family of a former classmate to find out where the latter has hidden a large sum of stolen money. A lingering danger, the transition from one age to another, the river, the shadows of trees, the children's fear and their solidarity in facing grown-ups are all motifs that make this film similar to O Sangué.

▶ They Live by Night (United States, 1948)
Nicholas Ray

This was the first film made by American director Nicholas Ray, who, for Jean-Luc Godard (who made Pierrot le Fou, another film in the CinEd collection), epitomized movie making. In this thriller, a young Bowie flees the police and tries to prove he was framed for a crime he didn't commit. His love for the daughter of a gas station owner (reminiscent of the innocent love between Clara and Vicente), his former fellow escapees who try to convince him to commit crimes, the use of dark and shadows, the letters and a pervading sense of tragedy were all sources of inspiration for Pedro Costa.



▶ Ossos, (Portugal, 1997)
Pedro Costa

After O Sangué and Casa de Lava (1994), filmed in Cabo Verde, Ossos is the last purely fictional film Pedro Costa made, shot with traditional production methods. Here Costa films a couple living in poverty. Suicides, births, deaths, life in the street and ethical issues are all explored in the characters' lives in the harsh reality of day-to-day Lisbon. Characters who, in O Sangué, were taking their first steps into the "world".



O Sangue: find the same atmosphere in...



The photography of
Paulo Nozolino
(Portugal, 1955)

A friend of Pedro Costa, Paulo Nozolino worked with him on O Sangue. He took some of the photos that inspired the filmmaker and which were used while scouting locations for the movie. His work offers up a universe similar to that of Pedro Costa for its use of the evocative power of darkness, ruins, and solitary space and emptiness as fuel for the imagination and for its ability to capture what isn't visible at first glance.



This student sheet was written by Carlos Natálio.