

## Inception

As Christopher Nolan's latest blockbuster starring Leonardo de Caprio sweeps through cinemas around the world, film critics ask: have film-makers found a new way of boosting box-office profits?

1 Have you seen *Inception*? Which answer (a-e) is closest to your own? Compare your answer with a partner.

(a) Yes. Fantastic!

(b) Not yet"

(c) No - I've not heard of it

(d) I've seen it twice!

(e) I don't go to the cinema

2 Practise saying the following numbers aloud.

20%	£25 million	three	five
second	\$4.5 million	\$80 million	Sixth

3 Scan the article and replace the missing numbers (1-8). Use the numbers from exercise two.

### Art-house or blockbuster?

Has Christopher Nolan, the clever director of *Inception*, invented a new idea? You make a film so complex that people just have to see it again. In the strange world of Hollywood, where commercially-minded executives are always trying to increase their box office takings, it is called the 'rehook' - consumers are encouraged back to the cinema to see a film a second time. Already in the US, one in [1] ....., or [2]..... of the audience, is going back to watch this film for a second time! They want to explore the film's hidden clues. The many visual and musical references can only be appreciated with multiple viewings.

The film is both ambitious and spectacular. Leonardo di Caprio specializes in breaking into people's minds to steal information from their subconscious. A Japanese businessman, played by Ken Watanabe, hires him to plant an idea in someone else's mind. What makes *Inception* different? It is not only a blockbuster, it's an intelligent blockbuster!

The idea of having to re-watch a film to really enjoy and understand it is not really so new. In 1999, fans of the Bruce

Willis classic the [3]..... *Sense* went to the cinema twice after watching the surprise ending, to see if the director, M Night Shalayman had been fair. Many cinemagoers watched *The Matrix* twice in order to work out the plot. Christopher Nolan also directed *Memento*, a film in which the story runs backwards. It was popular on DVD, as viewers could pause and re-watch scenes. Many fans of art-house director David Lynch watch and re-watch their favourite films, trying to work out the meaning of a particular puzzle in the storyline.

*Inception* has a big star in 'Leo' to attract audiences, yet, like many arty films, it is very much a 'word of mouth' movie. By early August, the film had taken over [4] ..... at the box office worldwide. It made [5]..... on opening in Spain and \$2 million in Brazil. It spent [6] .....weeks at the top of the US box office before *The Other Guys*, a comedy, knocked it into [7] ..... place. Any investor in the film industry will tell you that it's pretty hard to guess which films will be successful and which will fail. *Toy Story 3* has just become the UK's highest-grossing animated movie ever, taking over [8].....to date. With its universal story about the end of childhood, it's as far away from *Inception* as you can get in cinematic terms.

4 Read the complete article. What is *Inception* about? Which of the films mentioned in the article have you seen?

5 Decide if the following words are nouns (N), verbs (V) or both (B).

invent	encourage	explore	clue	specialize	plant
plot	pause	attract	investor	industry	guess

6 Work in small groups to discuss the questions. Be ready to report back to the class.

- Why do you think some films are 'hits' and some films fail? Give examples to support your reasons.
- Do you think a film can be a 'blockbuster' as well as being 'artistic'? If so, give examples.
- How do Hollywood films compare to those made in your own country? Which do you prefer?