

A twist in the tale as Netflix goes hunting for Oscars

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer

These words are all associated with the film industry. Complete each word.

- the American word for *film* m _ _ _ _ _
- the centre of the US film industry H _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- a video-streaming company N _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- another term for *Oscar* A _ _ _ _ _ A _ _ _ _ _
- an American television award E _ _ _ _

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

streaming
feature

eligible
norm

exclusive
convention

revive
outspoken

requirement
strategy

- A _____ is a plan or method for achieving something, especially over a long period of time. (para 1)
- An _____ person states their opinion honestly even if other people do not like it. (para 2)
- A _____ is a way of behaving that is generally accepted as being normal and right. (para 2)
- If something is _____, it is limited to a particular person or group and not shared with others. (para 2)
- If you are _____ for something, you are allowed by rules or laws to do it or receive it. (para 3)
- A _____ is something that a rule, law, contract etc states that you must do. (para 3)
- A _____ is something that is usual or expected. (para 7)
- _____ is a technology that enables sound or video to be received by your computer through the internet as a continuous stream. (para 8)
- A _____ length documentary is one that is the same length as a normal film. (para 9)
- If you _____ something, you make it successful or popular again. (para 10)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- How many users does Netflix have?
- What is Netflix's annual content budget?
- For how many days does a film have to be shown in Los Angeles before it can be considered for an Oscar nomination?
- How many cinema screens are there in the USA?
- How many Emmy nominations did Netflix get in September, 2018?
- How many Oscars has Netflix won?

A twist in the tale as Netflix goes hunting for Oscars

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

Cinema release – a twist in the tale as Netflix goes hunting for Oscars

Mark Sweney

21 November, 2018

- 1 Netflix's film *Roma* is expected to win an Oscar. The film was shown in cinemas worldwide recently as the company changed its strategy by using the big screen, and the marketing power of the Academy Awards, to attract more digital subscribers. The film has received good reviews and is one of three films that Netflix is releasing in cinemas before its 140 million users are allowed to see them.
- 2 The move is a significant change of strategy for the company. Ted Sarandos, the man in charge of Netflix's \$8bn annual content budget, has been an outspoken critic of the industry convention of giving films an exclusive run in cinemas before they are available on other platforms. But that was before Netflix decided that it wanted Oscars.
- 3 For a film to be eligible for entry in the annual Academy Awards, it must have played in a Los Angeles cinema for a minimum of seven consecutive days. *Roma* was released in LA, New York and Mexico, before opening in London on 29 November, 2018 and going worldwide on Netflix on 14 December. However, it will get just three weeks in US cinemas – the other two films will disappear after only a week each – as Netflix meets the minimum requirements.
- 4 "At the moment, Netflix is perhaps not quite exploiting the system but it is taking advantage of rules for entry, which suggests the situation is benefiting Netflix more than the Oscars," said Richard Broughton, a media analyst. "They are simply meeting the minimum requirements."
- 5 Apart from the Oscar rules, cinema owners have agreed with Hollywood studios that films run exclusively in US cinemas for 90 days before moving to other platforms. The subscription video-on-demand sector, where Netflix operates, has traditionally been a long way down the pecking order. There are similar agreements in most other countries but with different periods of exclusivity.
- 6 *Roma* was shown on more than 100 screens globally. It means it will probably be more successful than Netflix's biggest cinema release so far, 22 July. But it is nowhere near the level of a mass-market Hollywood release: the US has more than 40,000 screens and the UK over 4,000.
- 7 "Our position is that UK cinema operators would welcome anyone who brings quality films to the market," said Phil Clapp, chief executive of the UK Cinema Association. "However, most cinema operators would expect that those films would follow certain industry norms around a significant period of cinema exclusivity. We would hope, in due course, to persuade Netflix it is in their best interest, too."
- 8 It has long been known that winning awards sells tickets – or in Netflix's case, attracts new subscribers – but for the streaming giant, success at the Oscars is also about confirming its rise as the digital newcomer that broke the established Hollywood model. It has already conquered TV. In September, 2018, Netflix broke HBO's 17-year record for the most Emmy nominations, 108, by winning a total of 112.
- 9 So far, Netflix has achieved 14 Oscar nominations with two wins: *White Helmets*, a 40-minute documentary on volunteer rescue workers in Syria; and *Icarus*, a feature-length documentary on the Russian sports doping scandal. Amazon, however, became the first streaming company to win a best picture Oscar nomination for 2017's *Manchester by the Sea*, which won Casey Affleck best actor and was given a wide cinema release.
- 10 The 2018 Oscars broadcast attracted its lowest ever audience, partly the result of changing viewing habits because of the streaming revolution. So you could say that Hollywood needs Netflix to revive interest in its awards.
- 11 "This is a changing situation that is still being worked out by both sides," says Paul Dergarabedian, another media analyst. "However, the problem that Netflix faces is that while they want to be considered for Oscar nomination, their small-screen distribution model goes against the movie-theatre release convention. Amazon Studios has shown there are ways to bridge the gap while remaining true to the streaming service mission."

© Guardian News and Media 2018

First published in *The Guardian*, 21/11/18

A twist in the tale as Netflix goes hunting for Oscars

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. Netflix is releasing three films in cinemas first because it has to do that for the films to be considered for Oscar nominations.
2. Cinema owners and Hollywood studios have agreed that films should run for seven days in US cinemas before being shown on other platforms, such as TV or the internet.
3. There are more cinema screens in the UK than in the USA.
4. Netflix wants to attract more subscribers.
5. Netflix was the first streaming company to win a best picture nomination.
6. More and more people are watching the Oscar ceremony on TV.

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a noun meaning *someone who pays money in order to receive something regularly* (para 1)
2. an adjective meaning *following one after the other in order, with nothing in between* (para 3)
3. a verb meaning *use a situation so that you get benefit from it, even if it is wrong or unfair to do so* (para 4)
4. a four-word expression meaning *lower in an order of power or importance* (para 5)
5. a three-word adverbial phrase meaning *when it is the right time and not before* (para 7)
6. a noun meaning *a situation in which important people behave in a dishonest or immoral way that shocks people* (para 9)
7. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *be able to understand something* (para 11)
8. a three-word verb phrase meaning *reduce the differences that separate two things* (para 11)

6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| 1. minimum | a. market |
| 2. take | b. habits |
| 3. mass | c. subscriber |
| 4. small | d. requirements |
| 5. viewing | e. screen |
| 6. digital | f. advantage of |

A twist in the tale as Netflix goes hunting for Oscars

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text.

	verb	noun
1.	analyse	(person)
2.	require	
3.	subscribe	
4.	operate	(person/company)
5.	distribute	
6.	critique	(person)

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Cinemas are a thing of the past.
- Why rush to see a film in the cinema when it will be shown on TV eventually?