

Film Critique



A Film Criticism Method

Film represents not only a vision of the world by the artists, but also reflects your own relationship to the world around you. An objective “reading” of any film is necessary in understanding its “text” and what it reveals about that relationship. This method of film criticism requires that you view the film from both the director’s perspective and your own, then attempt to analyze how the film affects you, and how it is designed to affect the viewer. You will choose one film from the attached list for study. Then you will compose and submit, on the prearranged due date, an analytical research paper in which the following aspects of art criticism are addressed. [Your paper must cite *no fewer than six sources (textbooks and encyclopedias not allowed, only 3 internet sources allowed)*, must include an annotated Works Cited list as well as text citations, and must conform to standard MLA format.]

I. Initial Impression (10%)

View the film once. Then quickly record your notes and initial impressions. Consider the following questions:

- What was your initial, unedited reaction to this film?
- What emotions did it evoke (Did it make you sad, invigorated, uncomfortable, bored?)
- Why do you think you reacted in this manner to this particular film?
- What did the film “say to you”? (Bear in mind that this does NOT necessarily need to match your perception of the artists’ objective.)

II. Description (10%)

Describe, briefly and objectively, the plot of the film.

III. Background Research (30%)

Research the historical time period/event featured in the film. What is the “backdrop” against which the event(s) in your film are dramatized? This step is essential and should be completed before any analysis is attempted.

IV. Analysis (40%)

View the film for a second time keeping in mind the following topics for analysis:

1. **Groups:** **Part A:** What are the primary identity groups (ethnic, class, gender, profession, etc.)? Are they represented by “design” or do they just “happen” to be present? **Part B:** List 5 generalizations the film makes about all members of these groups.
2. **Narrative Dilemma:** **Part A:** Cite the central narrative dilemma for the protagonist(s). (This should be in the form of a question, ex: Will the incredibly naive little girl in the red cloak wake up and realize that the very persuasive “wolf” is really a cad and find happiness continuing to deliver goodies to her elderly relative?) **Part B:** Is this dilemma “identity” based (would more likely happen to the group represented...in the director’s view) or is it “general” (could happen to anyone in that situation)?
3. **Title:** **Part A:** Why was this title chosen for the film (Titles are usually decided upon at the film’s completion.)? How was it meant to “sell” the film? **Part B:** How does the title make you feel when you say it (aggressive, poetic, melancholy...)? **Part C:** Retitle the film to more accurately reflect its content or purpose.
4. **Thrust:** **Part A:** In no more than 2 sentences, describe the central “thrust” of the film, ex: “It warned me....it appealed for....it condemned...it celebrated....it honored....” **Part B:** Did it tell you something you needed to know or did it assume you should already know this?
5. **Argument:** In no more than 5 concise sentences, argue in your own words what the director was trying to say in the film. Do NOT summarize the film (you’ve already done that...) or use the names of characters. This is a summary of your understanding of the message of the film.

IV. Judgment (10%)

Compare this film with others of the same topic, genre, director....and evaluate its effectiveness based upon your perception of the director’s objective.

Extra Credit (10 points) Arrange with one of your classmates/family members to view the same film. Discuss your responses to Section IV, explain how they differed, and why you believe you varied in your interpretation.