

Writing About Film

I. General Purpose

People write about film to understand their own responses to a film; to share their enthusiasm for a film or a filmmaker; to convince others of a position; to explain or introduce new concepts, artists, directors, or films; to compare films, directors, actors, or eras; or to connect to a culture or field. **Audiences** include filmmakers, technicians, critics, professors, classmates, fellow film aficionados, and the general public.

II. Types of Writing

- Review (analysis and recommendation)
- Theoretical Essays (argumentative or persuasive)
- Critical Essays (critical, scholarly analysis)
- Analyses (examination of plot, character, style, dialogue, message, etc.)
 - Film History and National Character (production history, distribution/release history, or situation within film history)
 - Genres (types)
 - *Auteurs* (Vision, themes, “signature” of director or actors)
 - Formalism (Structure and style)
 - Ideology (political content)
 - Technical proficiency
 - Importance of acting and casting

III. Types of Evidence

- Concrete, specific details, illustrations, examples
- Primary Sources
 - Films, videos, DVDs
 - Published scripts/ screenplays
 - Shooting scripts
- Secondary Sources
 - Books, journals, magazines, electronic sources, indexes, interviews and profiles of filmmakers

IV. Writing Conventions

- Blend personal perspective with objective analysis.
- Writing should be both descriptive and analytical.

- Use concrete, specific details as support.
- Voice and tone are balanced between formal and casual.
- Introductions should grab reader.
- Correctness and accuracy are highly valued.
- Over-use of “I” may weaken an argument.

V. Terms/Concepts

- Adaptation
- Caricature
- Cinematographer
- Chiaroscuro lighting
- Context
- Contrapuntal sound
- Crosscutting
- Depth of field
- Director
- Dissolve
- Fade in
- Filmography
- Formalism
- Freeze frame
- Full shot
- Genre
- Iris shot
- Irony
- Jump cut
- Macrocosm
- Microcosm
- *Mise en scene*
- Montage
- Narration
- Narrative Structure
- Pan
- Period Piece
- Point of View
- Producer
- Scene
- Sequence
- Screenplay
- Shot/ reverse shot
- Sound effects
- Special effects
- Story Structure
- Subtext
- Swish pan
- Take
- Tracking shot
- Zoom shot

VI. Citation Style

MLA (Modern Language Association)

Sources:

Corrigan, Timothy J. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

McMahan, Elizabeth, Robert Funk and Susan Day. *The Elements of Writing about Literature and Film*. New York: Macmillan, 1988.

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