

## English 11

### Film Analysis: a few elements of note

- I. Lights
  - A. Color: tinted lens?
  - B. Bright or dim lighting?
  - C. Time of day?
  - D. Strong shadows or none?
  - E. Does lighting *change* during the scene, or remain static?
  
- II. Sound
  - A. Voice
    1. How loudly or softly does each character speak, and how does this impact (contribute or detract from) their action?
    2. Which character's voices are in the foreground, which in the background?
  - B. Sound effects?
    1. Notable or part of the background?
    2. What is conveyed by sound which is not captured visually?
  - C. Soundtrack (instrumental and/or vocal)
    1. Does this rise and fall with the action or provide a counterpoint?
    2. Does this provide a subtle background text, or does it play a major part in the action?
  
- III. Camera
  - A. Camera angle
    1. high or low?
    2. stationary or moving (circling, moving vertically, side to side, etc.)?
  - B. Zoom
    1. close-up or from distance?
    2. Stationary or moving?
  
- IV. Action!
  - A. Words
    1. What does each character say?
    2. Do the character's actions back up or counter what s/he is saying?
    3. Who hears what is said?
  - B. Movements
    1. Who acts upon each character?
    2. Are the effects of each action short or permanent?
  - C. Context
    1. What is going on in the background?
    2. What does the camera include in the periphery?
  - D. Tone of scene: One genre or a mix?
    1. Comedy? Tragedy? History? Action? Biography? Drama? Etc.
    2. What message is the scene conveying? Is there a message?
    3. What is the author's likely *intent* (a risky enterprise, I admit, guessing this) in a given scene?
  - E. Creating history
    1. How might this one, chosen scene be variously interpreted by multiple filmgoers?
    2. How effective is the scene, given your intents/perspective/goal, in comparison with your chosen text's construction of the same event with words alone (biography, periodical, etc.)?

**Analyzing Film: just a few informal prompts to get you started  
(feel free to use technical terms if you know them)**

Character

- 1) Anxious or Calm? Confident or doubting? Humorous or Serious? Intelligent or ignorant? Experienced or inexperienced? Optimistic or pessimistic? Bold or afraid? Etc.
- 2) Is character **emotionally** consistent across scenes, or capricious? Highly erratic or predictable? Emotionally stable? Devious? Histrionic?
- 3) Does character **change** over time? Improve? Degenerate? Learn? Become deceived?
- 4) Is role well-acted?

Time

- 1) Length of Movie
- 2) Length of scene
- 3) Pace/tempo of scene: short and choppy editing of shots, or long and smoothly joined?

Camera Work

- 1) Angles: from below, above, or level with object/character being filmed?
- 2) Camera: stable and stationary, or moving (rotating, moving up or down, zooming in or out?)
- 3) Close-ups? Shots from a distance?

Lighting

- 1) Strong, artificial lighting?
- 2) Natural lighting?
- 3) Use of shadows?

Color

- 1) Black & white or color?
- 2) Bright, primary colors, or earth tones? Washed out colors? Faded tones?

Sound

- 1) Dialogue articulate? Loud? Soft?
- 2) Sound effects added and effective? (action, voice resonance, etc.)

**For Analysis of *Film or Literature***

Context

- 1) What documented events/movements/philosophies/etc. provide background for your figure's action?
- 2) More specifically, what *problems/crises* provide a context for your figure's action? In relation to each of these events, does your figure appear heroic, villainous, bumbling, or impotent/invisible?
- 3) Do the characters who interact with and around your chosen figure serve as foils, counterparts, or mirror images for your figure? That is, how does your chosen personage appear in comparison to those around him/her? Better? Worse? Insignificant?

Figure

- 1) What **spoken words** are attributed to your figure? **By him/herself?** By **others?** By a **narrator?**
- 2) What **thoughts** are attributed to your figure (e.g. internal monologue, narrator, etc.)?
- 3) What **adjectives and adverbs** are used (by other characters, a narrator, etc.) to **describe** your figure?
- 4) In what **actions** does your chosen figure engage? Are these actions considered *characteristic* or *odd* given your figure's described personality and established patterns of behavior?

Source: Though we have established "validity" as a very slippery notion, consider for a moment the *apparent* validity/reliability of the configuration of history in question.

- 1) How veridical/verifiable are the events described? Are they general historical knowledge, likely to be found in a variety of sources? Are they popular legend? Are they events reported only by one or a few? Does their source detract from their validity, or add to a sense of their uniqueness and genuineness?
- 2) Consider the spoken words attributed to a given character. Could the author actually have access to these words/quotes, or is it more likely that he/she is actively creating such words and placing them in the figure's mouth? Watch for any *qualifying* phrases that precede or follow such quotes.
- 3) Does the author ever interject into the historical account, obviously and unapologetically, his/her own opinions concerning your chosen figure? Do you take such comments at face value?