

CRAVEarts  
**ALL AMERICAN  
HIGH SCHOOL  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK OF ANY FILM**

### Lesson Overview:

The following analysis questions are designed to help you engage as an active viewer while enjoying the thousands of films in our library. These questions will help you deconstruct the films by carefully considering all of the elements they employ to communicate the story and deliver an emotional impact. We hope that a careful, closer look will help you see more, ultimately revealing specific techniques that you can utilize in your next film project.

### Analysis Questions:

As you view the film, consider how the cuts, camera angles, specific shots and movement work to create a sense of mood and meaning. Think about how these elements establish space, privilege certain characters, suggest relationships, emphasize themes, or propel the plot. In addition to shot distances, angles, editing, and camera movement, note details of the story, setting, characters, lighting, props, costume, tone, and sound.

## **Initial Response**

1. Did the film move you emotionally? How did it make you feel?
2. What genre best describes the content and style of the film?
3. Consider the film's title. After viewing, does the title take on any new significance based on the story, themes, etc?
4. What aspect of the film was most engaging? What will you remember?
5. What did the film make you think about?
6. If you watched the film again, what would you focus on?

## **Character and Conflict**

1. Does the film feature a single protagonist (main character), dual protagonists (two sharing the same goals), parallel protagonists (two equally balanced protagonists with opposing goals) or multiple protagonists?
2. What are the protagonist's goals? What do they value?
3. Would you describe the protagonist(s) as active or passive? Explain.
4. What stands in the way of the protagonist achieving their goals (conflict)?
5. Who or what serves as the film's antagonist (can be a character, a conflict or both)?
6. What choices do the characters make? What motivates them?
7. What are the consequences for their choices and actions (character development)?
8. What do the main characters learn about themselves, and how do they change throughout the story?
9. What motivates the changes? Are there specific consequences related to these changes?
10. Is there a time deadline related to the characters achieving their goals? Explain.

## **Story Structure**

1. What is the first image (or images) you see on the screen? How does this imagery help establish a sense of the time and space of the story? What sense of mood and atmosphere does the imagery convey?
2. How is the story told (linear, with flashbacks, flash-forwards, episodically)?
3. How does the exposition help introduce the characters - where they are and why they are there?
4. What is the inciting incident (something that happens that forces the characters to act and sets up all of the actions that follow)?

5. Does the film have a traditional climax? Explain.
6. What occurs during the falling action that helps resolve the conflicts established earlier in the story?
7. How does the film end? Is everything resolved? How? If not, why not?
8. What are the major turning points in the story?
9. Are the five acts/major events evenly balanced throughout the film?
10. In what ways does the structure of the story (how the plot develops) enhance the viewer's ability to connect and root for the protagonist?
11. Does the world of the film work like the real world? If not, what makes it different?

### **The Elements of Film**

1. How does the film create specific reactions from the viewers (sound, editing, characterization, camera movement, etc.)? Why does the film encourage such reactions?
2. Is the setting realistic or stylized? What atmosphere does the setting suggest?
3. How is the film lit? Is color significant? If so, how?
4. What is illuminated, what is in the shadow? How does the lighting scheme shape our perception of character, space, or mood?
5. Where is the camera during significant shots related to important plot points? What angle does the camera shoot from during these moments?
6. What shot distances are used? Do you notice a movement from longer to closer shot distances? When are the various shot distances used (e.g., the opening of the scene, during a conversation, etc.)?
7. What purposes do the shot distances serve (how is viewer attention drawn to specific images)?
8. How do camera angles function? How do they shape our view of characters or spaces?
9. How do camera movements function? What information do they provide about characters, objects, and spaces? Do they guide the viewer's eye toward particular details? Do they align the viewer's perspective with that of a character?
10. What types of cuts are used? How are the cuts used (to establish rhythm, shift between characters, transition between spaces, mark passage of time)?
11. Does editing comment on the relationships between characters and/or spaces?
12. Do particular objects or settings serve symbolic functions? Explain using specific examples.
13. How are the characters costumed and made-up? What does their clothing or makeup reveal about their social standing, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or age?
14. How do costume and makeup convey character?

15. Do different characters use different kinds of language? Do certain characters speak through their silences?
16. What is the music's purpose in the film? Does it create a specific emotional effect?
17. How does the music direct our attention within the image? How does it shape our interpretation of the image?

### **Larger Implications, Commentary and Meaning**

1. What is the film's central theme?
2. How is the theme developed and emphasized throughout the story?
3. Is the theme expressed in a fresh, unique way? Explain.
4. Is the film pessimistic or optimistic about human nature?
5. What values does the film communicate? How do you know?
6. In what ways does the film comment or reflect on aspects of humanity and society (cultural, social, institutional, etc.)?