



Academic Writing Guide: How to Write a Film Analysis

GETTING STARTED:

- Watch a film with your full attention for the first time.
- We are all able to recount plot after watching a movie once; it is more difficult to explain how images and sounds presented make up such a narrative.
- So, watch the film again (and again and again)!
- As the authors of *Film Art: An Introduction* suggest: “Look and listen carefully” and “Think like a filmmaker” (307).

BEGINNING TO WRITE:

Consider the following questions:

1. What is the film's overall form?
2. What are the primary elements of style/filmmaking techniques being used?
3. What patterns are formed by the techniques?
4. What function do the techniques and patterns fulfill?

THE BASICS:

- Avoid plot summary - consider the audience of your essay: your Instructor! They have seen the movie so there is NO NEED to recount the entire plot!
- Don't waste precious words that could be used to describe and analyze a technique, scene, or microelement of the film in detail!
- Rather than plot, focus on meaning.
- Plot is what's on the surface of a film, easily visible to the audience, whereas the film's meaning is waiting to be uncovered by you, the viewer!
- Remember, interpretations vary. Generate your own interpretation of the film and run with it!

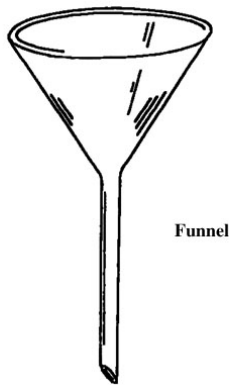
FILM STUDIES WRITING RULES:

- At first mention, connect the film to its director and year of release: “Raging Bull (Martin Scorsese, 1980) explores...” or “Raging Bull, released in 1980 and directed by Martin Scorsese, explores...”
- Always Italicize film titles
- At first mention, connect film characters to the actors who portray them: “Jake LaMotta (Robert Deniro) struggles...” or “Jake LaMotta, played by Robert Deniro, struggles...”

- Afterwards, just the first name of the character and last name of the director is sufficient!
- When writing about what happens in the film, use the present tense: "The film depicts..." "The film follows..." "Jake responds..." "The camera pans..." "Scorsese uses..."

FILM STUDIES THESIS STATEMENT:

A thesis statement for a Film Studies essay is like a funnel:



THE GENERAL

- The film and/or director does something
 - How does the film/director do it?
- What specific stylistic elements/film techniques are involved?
 - What is the result?

THE SPECIFIC

FILM STUDIES CITATIONS:

- When discussing or describing specific scenes/shots in a film, you need to provide in-text citations known as the time range/stamp: "Wozniak (Seth Rogen) again asks that Jobs (Michael Fassbender) credit the Apple II team during the presentation, and again he refuses (Steve Jobs 00:22:29-00:23:37)."
- ALWAYS cite all sources, including films on a MLA Style Works Cited page (a separate page following your essay): Steve Jobs. 2015. Directed by Danny Boyle, performance by Michael Fassbender, Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2016.
- **Failure to provide proper citations will result in you receiving 0 and an Academic Alert being filed!**

For additional help, please make an appointment with a Writing & Learning Centre Humanities specialist at: <https://alexander.mywconline.com/>