

## 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 (from Ch. 8):

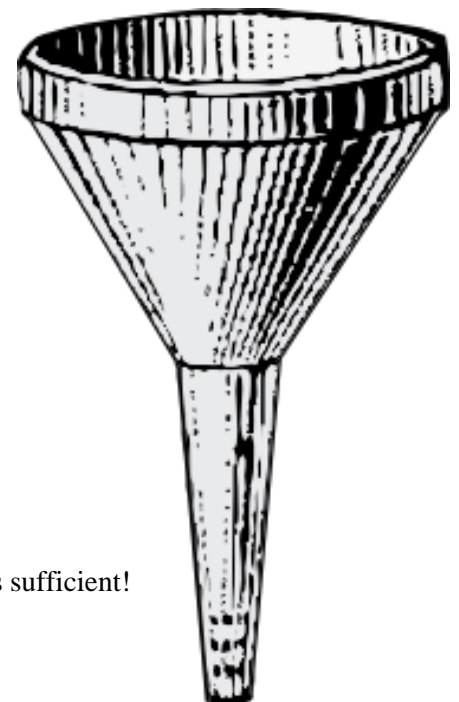
1. What is the film’s overall form?
2. What are the primary elements of style/filmmaking techniques being used?
3. What patterns are formed by the techniques?
4. What function do the techniques and patterns fulfill?

### THE BASICS:

- Avoid plot summary - consider the audience of your essay: your Instructor! She has 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 micro-element 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/techniques are involved?
    - What is the result?

#### **THE SPECIFIC**