

Viewing a film

First Impressions for a writing task or class discussion

This task could be presented to students prior to the viewing to assist their focus. The class could also be divided in groups which concentrate on different aspects.

Write/Give an account of your reactions to your viewing of the film. Support any claims with as much detail as you can recall.

Try to organise your thinking along the following lines:

1. **Title:** does it have any particular significance or does it merely state a fact?
2. **Plot:** give an account of the plot, briefly recounting what the film is about outlining how the story unfolds. Is the story straightforward or are there any subplots?
3. **Characters:** make a list of the characters and indicate what part they play in the story. Are these characters fully portrayed or do we only learn what is essential for the unfolding of the details of the plot? Do the characters divide into groups according to eg age, sex, job...? Watch for the way characters are revealed and note particularly how they react/ behave with different people and note how these different relationships reveal strengths and or weaknesses.
4. **Themes:** is/are there any underlying message(s) conveyed in the film. Is the message personal or universal? How is the theme presented and reinforced? How successful has the cinéaste been in convincing you or changing your attitude? Eg the rat-race, consumerism, keeping up with the Jones', courage in the face of adversity, racism, environmental issues, inclusion, the generation gap, relationships between parents and children....
5. **Setting:** where does the story take place? Urban or the countryside. How many different settings are there? Is the setting

itself important to the extent that it suggests or reinforces a theme, or can it be considered a “character” that is omnipresent, essential to the events of the plot?

6. **Cinematography:** are there any specific techniques exclusive of audio-visual ones used to create desired effects

Eg; **photography**-close ups, long distance shots zooming in, wide panning, unusual camera angles, light and dark, colour contrasts (to black and white or sepia) to create time zones

music- classical, pop, songs, lyrics

sounds-traffic, voices, footsteps, the use of tv to emphasise or underline a theme or a state of affairs

flashbacks

7. **Cultural background:** apart from language and the overall setting are there any features that are exclusively French? Are there any details which add to your knowledge of the French, their way of life, customs, priorities- meal time, food and its preparation, bars, cafés, school, class room procedures, canteen, transport...

8. **Language:** try to make some initial comments about your reactions to what you have heard, the subtitles, formal V informal?

9. **Special situations:** are there significant scenes throughout the film where information on characters or plot is revealed? Were any scenes after a first viewing that are particularly memorable? Explain why they are significant.

10. **Ending:** Did you expect this? Could the film have ended elsewhere? With what results? Could the film have another ending?

Bons films

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