How To Analyze Movies Like A Boss

The Beat Sheet

This document is going to help you analyze movies, whether it's for school assignments or movie reviewing or other writing about film. Essentially, it will help you get a deeper understanding of any film you see.

To properly analyze a movie, you may have to watch the movie more than once, or rewatch certain scenes, though this gets easier when you get more practiced at it. Note, though, that analyzing a movie properly does take quite a bit of practice!

Print the beat sheet, take out a pen, start your movie and take notes. If you're unsure about what any of the elements mean, make sure you read all blog articles of the "How to Analyze Movies Like a Boss" series on FilmInquiry.com.

Before You Start The Movie

Write down the following

Name of the movie:

Year of release:

Director:

Genre:

Stars:

Your expectations:

While Watching The Movie

Now, go and take notes while you're watching the movie. While at first it is hard to watch the movie, consider all the little elements and still see the bigger whole *and* enjoy the movie, it'll get easier when you practice often. You'll get attuned to it! If you need it, use the pause button so you don't miss anything!

Acting performances

Direction
(Is the movie coherent and cohesive? How is the script visualized? Are the actors well-cast? How is it filmed? Consider all creative elements of the film)

Story
(Flow, construction, beginning and end, moral, et cetera)

Genre and iconography
(What elements are used to set the genre of the film?)

Mise-en-Scène
(What elements do you see in individual scenes that add to the story and the overall effect to the movie? What purpose and what effect do they have, how were they created?)

Cinematography
(What shot types and camera angles are used and to what end, also consider camera movement)

Lighting and Sound
(What types of lighting are used and to what purpose; what about sound, is it diegetic or dubbed, and why?)

Editing
(Think about continuity, types of cuts, and what their purpose and effect are)

Score
(Does the score fit the movie, what does it do for the mood of the film?)

Realism

(How is the seeming realism achieved?)

Signs and Codes

(Seeing these require the most practice. Signs are small elements that signify certain meaning. Codes are groups of signs which can create bigger, more significant meaning)

Conventions

(Consider conventions used in the film – that what we take for "normal" in film, but may not actually be normal in reality, e.g. the inherently bad guy)

After Having Watched The Movie

The Message

Now, after you've finished the movie, consider all your notes. What is the message this movie tells its audience? How do they achieve it? How do all these little elements add to this achievement?