

WRITING ABOUT MOVIES

*Film illustrates "the entertainment and the ideological sides of popular culture
– the two sides are mutually interdependent" (Maasik and Solomon 8).*

Asking yourself questions while you watch a movie can help you notice details that are essential to writing a good analysis. While you watch a film assigned for class, consider the questions listed below. The questions should help you notice and later annotate details that could otherwise escape your attention:

IN GENERAL:

What does the title mean in relation to the story?

Why does the movie start and end the way it does?

When was the film made?

Why are the opening credits presented in such a manner against this particular background?

Why does the film conclude on this image?

Which three or four sequences are the most important?

Each of these questions will help prepare you to analyze and write about movies.

MORE SPECIFICALLY:

WHO? Who are the main characters? Who are the minor characters? (Pay attention to their names, physical characteristics, styles of speaking, clothing, etc.) Who associates with whom? Who agrees, works together, helps each other; and who disagrees, argues? Who are the “good” characters? How do you know? Who are the “bad” characters? Again, what details tell you so?

WHAT? What happens in the film? What happens to different characters? What characters get punished by the plot? What characters get rewarded? What sorts of roles do different types of people seem to play? What do they typically do and say? What do they look like? What do they wear? What are their values, ways of thinking, states of mind? What does the title suggest about the text’s focus?

WHERE? Where does the movie take place? Where does it begin? Where does it end? What places, rooms, buildings, landscapes are shown? Are there “good” places? “Bad” places? What details are used by the filmmaker to suggest that connotation? What kinds of scenes or objects are placed in the background when certain characters are talking, acting, thinking?

HOW? How do the characters seem to perceive each other? How do these perceptions change? How do details from specific scenes suggest certain meanings? How does the filmmaker influence you as a viewer?