

IB Film Analyzing Films

From Film Fan to Scholar

Fan	Scholar
Attracted to film as a source of entertainment	Also attracted to film as art/cultural expression
Bases taste on popularity and celebrity	Adds critical awareness, scholarship, broad cultural understanding
Tends to discuss in literary or dramatic terms	Also uses the language of cinematic analysis
Interprets film through lens of own culture	Interprets film through most appropriate cultural lens

Textual analysis

It is essential that students are able to understand how meanings are constructed within and through film texts, and to view the production of these texts in a broader framework. Students should be able to identify how film uses a range of devices to represent experiences and stories, as well as to convey meanings and values. They should be able to acquire and use the appropriate tools for analysing films from various countries and place these within wider sociocultural perspectives. Students should develop both their own enjoyment of film and lifelong habits of critical inquiry.

Students should move between close textual analysis of specific scenes and analysis of films as a whole, contextualizing meanings within a larger framework.

Students should use the key concepts of **film language**, **genre**, **audience**, **institution**, **narrative** and **representation** to generate initial questions about the texts they are analysing.

Textual analysis involves commenting upon the following elements, and on relationships between them.

- Construction according to narrative or other formal organizing principles
- Representation of characters and issues
- Camera angles, shots and movement
- Editing and sequencing
- Lighting, shade and colour
- Sound
- Location and set design
- Features determining genre
- Target audience
- Historical, economic, sociocultural and institutional factors

Commentary features

- Not building an argument or defending a thesis
- Drawing out as many relevant insights and observations as possible
- Uses concepts or focus areas as unifying principle rather than sequence of shots

Although simple description is sometimes necessary, it should be minimal. A useful hierarchy of questions to have students ask themselves about each comment they might make is this:

- What do I see/hear?
- What is this called?
- How is it done?
- In what way is it connected to something else?
- What does it mean?