



CINEMAGIC

FILM REVIEWING TIPS

WHEN REVIEWING THESE SHORT FILMS, BE SURE TO WATCH WITH A CRITICAL EYE – INSTEAD OF SIMPLY WATCHING FOR ENJOYMENT, TRY TO ANALYSE THE CINEMATIC AND STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES USED. IN PARTICULAR, LOOK OUT FOR THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

STORY

- What genre is the film? Think of how the film establishes a genre – does it have the darker tone of a horror film, or the fast-paced style of an action film? Keep in mind a film can – and often is – of multiple genres.
- Is the story well structured? In short film, there is a very limited amount of time for the filmmaker to create a world in which the story takes place and to develop a plot. Consider the ways in which they have established this – expositional dialogue and flashbacks are techniques often used to establish a story at the beginning of the film.
- Consider the themes being dealt with, and how they are handled – if it is a sensitive theme, has it been presented realistically or has it been stylised and adapted to suit the genre of the film?

CHARACTERS

- For the protagonist: are they presented as a HERO or ANTI-HERO? An anti-hero would be the central focus of the story, but without conventional attributes for a hero such as morality and idealism. Consider why the protagonist is presented in this way; do their flaws make for a more realistic and relatable character?
- Try to analyse how the characters develop throughout the film – in what ways has the protagonist changed from the beginning of the film?

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SOUND

- How has the sound editing improved or changed the feel and tone of the film? Is the music used effectively to create this tone? For example, in a horror jump-scare moment, sound plays a huge part in creating the effect – often the music and overall sound dips beforehand, making the sudden interjection of sound and the jump-scare all the more impactful.
- **DIAGETIC SOUND** – Sound which naturally occurs in the scene, such as a character's dialogue or the sound of their footsteps as they walk.
- **NON-DIAGETIC SOUND** – Any music, sound effects or dialogue that has been added in post-production, such as a voiceover.

CAMERA

- Consider the different camera angles used – are close-ups used to highlight significant parts of the story or to capture an emotional reaction? Are there a variety of camera shots used thoughtfully? Every camera shot in a film is used for a reason, so try to identify why these have been used.

Different shot types include:

- Close Up
- Mid Shot – from the waist up, shows more facial expression while keeping some background in the shot.
- Long Shot – generally shows a character or object in full.
- Establishing Shot – shows the location of the film.

There are many different types of camera shots, so try to decide why certain ones have been included in the film.

- What kind of camera movement is there? Is the camera steady or is it handheld? Handheld camera can create a frenetic, intense feel to the film, so think about why these movements may be used.

Different camera movements include:

- Tracking shot – follows a character or object as it moves.
- Panning shot – the camera moves from one side to another to reveal more of the scene.
- Tilt – this can create unease or a sense of disorientation.

Again, there are plenty more camera movements, so try to understand why the camera moves in the way it does.

As an exercise, when watching each film give it a rating out of five for each of the categories we've listed – **STORY, CHARACTERS, SOUND and CAMERA** – that way you can begin to compare and contrast the effectiveness of each film.

Identifying and analysing the effectiveness of these aspects of the films can even help inspire you if you create your own films, so keep an eye out for these techniques even when watching films in your own time.