Narrative
WIX website BLOG

NAME: _____

NARRATIVE

Narrative is simply a word for describing the plot or storyline of a film. Most mainstream films follow a very straightforward, linear structure. At the beginning of the narrative, the audience is introduced to the central characters. There is some kind of disruption to the normal state of affairs which leads to a series of problems and complications that the characters must deal with. The narrative pushes towards a resolution – sometimes happy, sometimes not – where the problem is solved or left open-ended.

We study narratives so we can learn how to be better filmmakers, discovering how directors – using camera techniques, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting and sound – to tell a story.

WHAT IS GENRE?   Genre is a French word that means 'type'. In Media Studies, we classify films into different genres. When you walk around your local video store or browse through films to buy online, they are often categorised into genres. Some notable genres include: action, adventure, comedy, crime, epic films, horror, musicals, science fiction, war films, westerns and film noir.

The conventions of a genre are the elements that commonly occur in such films, they may include things like characters, situations, settings, props, themes and events. For example, a convention of the science-fiction genre is that the narrative often incorporates advanced technology. Sometimes, films cannot be easily classified into a single genre.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

Production elements—including Camera Techniques, Acting, Mise-en-scene, Editing, Lighting and Sound—are the basic storytelling tools that directors have at their disposal.

STORY ELEMENTS

Story elements—including Setting, Time, Opening Development & Resolution, Multiple Storylines, Point of View, Characters and Cause & Effect - are the basic storytelling tools that directors have at their disposal.

For this assessment task you will be looking at the following:

ACTING

Acting makes a significant contribution to the storytelling in narrative films. Most of the time actors help to tell the story in a subtle way, through gestures, body language, movement and the tone of their voice. Through these things, actors can tell the audience a great deal about their characters.
When you're watching a scene, pay close attention to actor's facial expressions, movement, gestures and tone of voice. Think about how the performance helps to develop characters and tell the story.

SETTING

This is where the Cinematographer has selected the narrative be filmed. They consider things like, lighting, the physical boundaries of the location, what the audience will already understand about the area and how it relates to what they are revealing in the narrative. Your job is understand why the location was selected. What themes does it connect with for the audience?

POINT OF VIEW

You must remember that when we are talking about Point of View as a Story Element we are referring to the Point of View from which the narrative is based. More than often it is based around the point of View from the leading characters. This is what you will be discussing.

MULTIPLE STORYLINES

A director will use Multiple Storylines to do one of the following – Engage the audience, confuse the audience, help the audience understand the characters behaviours and motives, relate to themes and plot and lead audiences away from the twist. It's our job as Media students to determine what the Multiple storylines were and why were they used?

OPENING, DEVELOPMENT & RESOLUTION

Every film has these three components to their narrative. You must remember to discuss all three major components to this area of study. One does not work without the other. The director will have employed both production and story elements to convince the audience that the Opening, Development and Resolution are taking place. It's your job to determine what they are and why were they used?

THINKING ABOUT CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

In class, we're going to examine how characters are established in a number of films. Like every other aspect of storytelling, characters are established using camera techniques, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting and sound.

When you are asked to explain how a character is established, you will need to watch the scene you're looking at several times and consider the following questions.

• **Camera techniques.** Are there any particular camera techniques that help to tell me about this character? Look out for uses of shot size, camera angle or camera movement that might reveal something about the character.

• **Acting.** What do the actor do? Think about their movement, facial expression, gesture and tone of voice. Describe this and explain how it helps to develop the character.

• **Mise en scene.** Think about costume, make up, the positioning of props, the use of colour…how does this develop the audience's understanding of the character?

• **Editing.** Think about every cut and transition in the scene. Does it help to reveal something about the character? Is the editing fast paced or slow? Are there flashbacks? Think about the sound editing, are some sounds louder than others and does this help to develop the characters?

• **Lighting.** Think about how the character is lit. Is the light natural or artificial? Is it warm or cool? Is it high key or low key? Are there shadows?

• **Sound.** How do sound effects, music and dialogue help to tell us about the character?

WRITING ABOUT CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Now that you've identified some of the ways that the director is conveying information about a character, it's time to start writing something more formal.

Always open with a topic sentence like this which identifies the film, the director and some of the production elements used to develop that character.

In *Up in the Air*, director Jason Reitman uses a number of production elements, including editing, acting and sound, to establish the character of Ryan Bingham.

Then go on to give further detail.

Early in the film, Ryan is packing his bag for yet another business trip. There is a tightly edited series of shots showing him quickly packing his bag. Folding up a t-shirt, Reitman jump cuts to a shot of Ryan putting in his running shoes, zipping up various compartments. No shot in this sequence lasts more than a few seconds which helps to establish that he is an efficient traveller. The director uses a similar pace of editing when he is going through security at the airport.

Sound is also used to establish this character. In this scene, fast paced music helps to create the impression that he is an efficient traveller. His voice over also helps to explain this. "All the things you probably hate about travelling…are warm reminders that I'm home," he says.

In this scene, acting also helps to tell the audience about this character. When he arrives at the flight desk, the woman at the desk smiles warmly. Ryan returns the smile, this small example of acting helping to create the impression that he's a ladies' man.

Every paragraph should open with a topic sentence, explaining the technique you're about to discuss. Give examples of how the technique is used and what it tells the audience about this character.

Finish with a topic sentence similar to the once you started with.

Throughout this scene, director Jason Reitman uses a number of techniques – including editing, sound and acting – to develop the character of Ryan Bingham.

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DISCUSSION POINTS

GENRE
Outline the genre and style and how did you know this?

SETTING
Where was this film text set and how did you know this? Why did the cinematographer and director select this location? What and how does it engage the audience?

CHARACTERS
Who
Why
Protagonist
Antagonist

POINT OF VIEW
Discuss the Point of View from with the narrative is presented. Outline how and why you know this.

OPENING, DEVELOPMENT & RESOLUTION
What were the Production elements used to convey the themes and motifs in the Opening, Development and Resolution? How and why were they used?

MULTIPLE STOYLINES
What were they?
Why were they used?
What impact did they have on the audience?

	VH 5	H 4	M 3	L 2	VL 1	NS 0
Appropriate selection of Template for the BLOG						
Genre: Has this been identified? Were Production & Story Elements identified in this discussion?						
Setting: Was this correctly identified and outlined reasons why? Were Production & Story Elements identified in this discussion?						
Characters: Who / Why / Protagonist & Antagonist identified. Were Production & Story Elements identified in this discussion?						
Point of View: A comprehensive discussion from which the narrative's POV was based. Were Production & Story Elements identified in this discussion?						
Opening, Development & Resolution: Have all 3 components been discussed. Were Production & Story Elements identified in this discussion?						
Multiple Storylines: What were they? Why were they used?						