

Formal Analysis

- Knowing film language is important for us because it allows us to communicate about how the cinematic elements of a film impact the viewer.
- One of the basic tools of the film critic is FORMAL ANALYSIS.

What is Formal Analysis?

- It is a close inspection of the **artist's** use of aspects such as camera motion, lighting, and sound.
- The **formal analysis** moves beyond simple description in that it connects the elements of the work to the effects they have on the viewer.

What goes into a Formal Analysis?

1. Describe the scene chronologically.
 2. Detail the film elements used by name.
 3. Refer to the characters, story, and dialogue as you write.
 - a. THIRD PERSON (no I, we, you)
 4. After describing the elements, analyze their collective impact on the viewer.
 5. Refer to the elements by name and describe the impact on the "viewer."
 - THIRD PERSON (no I, we, you)
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The Assignment: You will analyze two scenes from Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) in a Formal Analysis mini-paper of no more than 4 pages double-spaced. You will need to write a brief introduction of the scenes in the context of the film before entering into your analysis. The scenes will be posted on Markwalter's website. You will write your analyses in your Film Journal.

1. Brief Introduction of *Citizen Kane* as a movie and the question you are trying to answer.
 1. **How are we supposed to feel about Kane?**
2. Four paragraphs (two per scene) Formal Analysis that attempts to answer the question.
3. Final paragraph should also contain some conclusion about the question.

Criteria:

40%: Depth of analysis of the film form. Do you explain clearly and convincingly the impact the cinematic choices have on the audience?

40%: Clear handling of film vocabulary. Do you accurately describe what occurs in the scene in DETAIL using proper film vocabulary?

20%: Writing conventions. Is your writing free of typos and other surface errors? Does the writing flow well?

Due: 10/26

Helpful Thoughts

- You are NOT writing an essay. We are basically practicing the EVIDENCE section of an essay/review.
 - Think of Formal Analyses as EVIDENCE in order to make a conclusion about a film.
 - Here is what HAPPENED.
 - Here is what it MEANS.
 - Leave the reader with WHY we should care.
- Let your intro set the tone:
 - E.g. “*Citizen Kane* directed by Orson Welles and released in 1941 is a complex film that leaves the audience trying to piece together the life of Charles Foster Kane.”

Previous Student Example:

Citizen Kane was released in 1941, and the director of this movie was Orson Welles. This movie is about Charles Foster Kane’s dying word, “Rosebud”. The movie uses Kane’s last words as a reason for a reporter to learn out about Kane’s life so he can find out what “Rosebud” means. The audience follows along as people from Kane’s life share different stories through flashbacks or writings. Orson Welles made many artistic choices throughout the movie that allows the audience to discover more about Kane than what is said or shown. The next two scenes show how the audience are supposed to feel about Kane at that point in the movie.

The scene starts with a long shot which shows young Kane by a snowman throwing snowballs. He yells something before yelling “The union forever!” Mrs. Kane then pops into the frame telling Charles to be careful and to pull his mufflers to his neck. The camera then starts tracking backwards to show Mr. Thatcher by the window...