

Dear Students,

Below are summary notes for Aesthetic Analysis and the Analytical Paper. Remember that the first draft is due the week we return.

Aesthetic Analysis

Unlike *basic narrative analysis*, which considers character traits in light of narrative outcomes and event contexts, and *semiotic analysis*, which scrutinizes the components of an event (setting, character, object, action) for symbolic meaning, *aesthetic analysis* focuses primarily upon factors related to form and style. Form refers to the medium itself (e.g. comic art, film, 3D animation, literature, etc.) while style refers to the way the medium is used to achieve specific aesthetic effects (e.g. harsh and spare use of lighting in “film noire”). Thus, when performing an aesthetic analysis, you are primarily focusing on the “deconstruction” of the process through which the media text was produced. For this reason, it’s a good idea to perform aesthetic analyses on media texts that appear in formats wherein you have some production experience and familiarity with the tools of the trade.

Some general features that might be considered from an aesthetic perspective are as follows:

1. Exposition: The aesthetic effect of dialog or writing. The ability it has to conjure emotion.
2. Mise en scène: Literally “putting on stage.” The choice of set components.
3. Lighting: The perceptual or emotional affordances of light or how light is described. Is it hard or soft, bright or dim, and what effect does this have on the reader/spectator/player, etc.?
4. Color: The perceptual or emotional affordances of color or how it is described. Is it warm or cool, bright or saturated, fluorescent or pastel, etc.?
5. Composition: How are the elements of the frame or a description of those elements arranged and what perceptual or emotional effect does this have?
6. Depth and Focus: How deep is the field of view? What is in focus and what isn’t? How do these factors guide the attention of the viewer?
7. Texture: How are the surfaces of objects presented and what effect does this achieve?
8. Movement: Movement is represented different ways in different media forms. How does movement effect perception, attention and/or emotion?
9. Editing: How do the pieces of the media text fit together and what is the overall impact on perception, attention, and/or emotion?
10. Sound: Music, Voice, Noise and their associated aesthetic effects.
11. Time: How is the subjective experience of time established and what effects does it achieve?

This list isn’t comprehensive or systematic, but the consideration of any of these factors from the perspective of the reader/spectator/player’s sense experiences would constitute an aesthetic analysis.

Analytical Paper:

The steps you should follow for preparing the rough draft of your analytical paper are as follows:

1. Find a media text that warrants investigation based on its personal and/or social value.
2. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the media text before taking any notes.
3. Section 1: Introduce the media text (including summary and background information) and explain why it's worthy of study.
4. Section 2: Introduce the theoretical perspective(s) and method(s) of inquiry and provide a rationale for why these are most applicable to your specific text.
5. Transcribe your media text and perform an analysis using a systematic method (see summary notes for "The Salt March," "Conan the Barbarian," and "The Journey").
6. Use your transcription/analysis to interpret your media text and develop observations and evidence for the body of your paper.
7. Section 3: Present your observations and evidence in the body of your paper.
8. Section 4: Draw conclusions about the "meaning" of the media text for the individual and/or society.

Ask about any of these steps if you have questions.

-Dr. Jones