

Twenty questions to consider when watching a film

These questions are based on those in *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema* (Damaris, 2007). They are intended to help you organise your thinking as you watch a film. As well as helping you in your own thinking about movies, these questions also provide a useful framework for group discussions (in a Culturewatch Group, for example – see www.damaris.org/culturewatchgroups). You can download a fuller list of questions as well as guidelines for leading discussions from www.tonywatkins.org/focus.

First response

1. How did the film make you feel? What aspects worked well, and which didn't (think about writing, direction, cinematography, acting, editing and soundtrack)?
2. To what extent did it fit with your expectations, or did it subvert them in some ways?

Structure

3. What causes the major turning points in the narrative to come?
4. Does the world of the film work like the real world? If not, what are the differences?
5. How does the film end? Is everything resolved? How? If not, why not?

Characters

6. How would you describe the main characters? What are their goals? What problems do they face?
7. What choices do the characters make? What motivates them? What are the consequences?
8. What do the main characters learn about themselves, and how do they change?

Meaning

9. Whose point of view does the camera represent?
10. How is our attention drawn to particular images? How are particular visual elements used as symbols or metaphors?
11. How does the film's editing contribute to the meaning of the film?
12. How does the film handle the underlying themes (morality, politics, religion, sexuality, happiness, freedom, love, spirituality, identity, etc.)?
13. Are there any religious themes or connections? How is faith treated (if at all)?

Worldviews

14. **What is the view of reality?** Is there any place for God or other spiritual dimensions to life? Is impersonal fate used as a substitute for God?
15. **What is the view of humanity?** What does the film say about the nature of human beings? What does the film say about communities and families?
16. How is the image of God within human beings seen in this film? How is human rebellion against God expressed?
17. **What is the view of knowledge?** How do characters know what is true (experience, logic, intuition or revelation)? How do they make decisions? Where do they find wisdom?
18. **What is the view of morality?** What does goodness mean? How do characters make moral decisions? What are the characters' values, and are these the same as the film's values?
19. **What do human beings most need in life?** Does the film identify any universal problems confronting human beings? What do humans need in order to flourish? What does it see as the point of life? What substitutes for God are there in the film?
20. What good insights into life are there in the film? What does it get wrong? How might it affect viewers?