Paper 3

Instructor: James Knippen

Notes:

• Prompt included
• Terminal comment only, typed
PAPER TWO: THE MOVIE REVIEW

For this assignment, pick a movie and write a review of it. Using specific examples from the movie to support your argument, clearly explain why audiences should or should not spend their hard-earned money to see the film you’ve chosen to write on.

Things to keep in mind:

Reasons to see the movie might include its social message, its emotional effectiveness, the ease with which its plot can be followed, its level of technical achievement, the means by which it causes the viewer to care about its characters, the quality of the acting, etc. Keep in mind that these could also be reasons to avoid seeing the movie.

Ask yourself what the filmmakers seem to want to achieve, and then determine whether they are successful in achieving the apparent goals of the film (Does the film seek to merely entertain? If the film has a “message,” is the message adequately defended? Is the film’s message even justifiable?). What are the purposes of the film, and are those purposes met?

The movie can be on DVD or in theaters. It can be from any genre (action, drama, horror, documentary, romantic comedy, sci-fi, western, sci-fi-western, etc.). Be aware that audiences have certain expectations of these genres. For example, will an audience that is primarily interested in horror movies want to see the romantic comedy you’re reviewing? Consider directing your review toward a specific audience.

Finally, since this class deals with personal essays, feel free to use your personal experience with the film as evidence for your argument. For example, is the film you are reviewing one you regularly watch together with your family during certain holidays? What about the film brings your family together? Could this be a reason others should see the film?

Expectations:

1. A clear thesis statement located at the end of the introductory paragraph. The thesis should contain both a claim and support (RW 579-582, BH 25-31)
2. Clear topic sentences that state your point for that particular body paragraph (BH 62-64)
3. Support for your claim and analysis in each body paragraph (BH 66-68)
4. A conclusion that briefly recaps your central idea and considers why it is important (RW 591-593)
5. Evidence that you are aware of and have considered the film’s potential audience

Formatting Requirements:

1. double-spaced
2. one inch margins
3. 12 Times New Roman font
4. name, due date, and English 1310 listed at the top left corner of the first page
5. a centered title above the first paragraph
6. 750-1000 words
“The Help,” is a fantastic masterpiece that portrays the life and true tribulations of colored maids in Mississippi in the 1960’s. This eye-opening and honest depiction of the daily lives of the maids help younger generations understand the exact troubles, like unfair wages and cruel acts of prejudices, serving women faced. With adversity knocking on their doors, the maids sought refuge in a white woman who helped their voice be heard. This movie not only appeals to romantic comedies viewers, it reaches out and entertains people of all race, age and gender. It addresses the issue of race, has impeccably accurate costumes, and is overall a wonderfully comedic movie.

This movie addresses prejudices with different races throughout the entire hour and forty-eight minute span. “Eugenia,” often referred to as “Skeeter,” is a young writer who notices that people of all skin color should be treated equally. Another character, “Hilly Holbrook,” tries to make a claim that African Americans contain different germs than Caucasian people carry. “Skeeter” replies with a snarky comeback, and “Hilly” is soon hushed. She defends and stands up for the colored maids by disapproving of racial comments made towards her own maid and care taker. She fights for civil equality by publishing true stories from various colored maids from the town of Jackson, Mississippi in a novel entitled, Help. As soon as the best-selling book is released, the women who were guilty of patronizing the colored maids immediately stopped their acts of hatred and started treating their maids with compassion and sympathy. “Skeeter” is an advocate for equality for all races. Her witty comebacks and courage to speak the truth,
despite popular opinion, help the viewers realize that we are all equal. The Help definitely puts racism in its place.

One of the most prominent features this movie excels in is the costume and make-up. The timely props, dresses and men’s attire, and accurate usage of make-up transport the viewer to downtown Jackson, Mississippi in 1962. The costume and set designer’s eye for detail is impeccable. In the opening scene, the camera pans down a street of the town. Immediately we see retro-looking architecture on houses along with bright colored automobiles. The perfect way to describe the overall look of the houses in the neighborhood would be trimmed and clean, no shutter out of place on windows, no lawn uncut, no dents in automobiles. People of the sixty’s cared greatly about the appearance of everything, and that fact is proven by this movie. The accuracy of the dress, hair and make-up of the characters in this movie should also be noted and will be appreciated by moviegoers who take interest in previous decades’ style and attire. Despite the fact that the maids in this movie were serving the whole time, the women never failed to have perfectly trimmed and personal white aprons over baby blue fitted dresses. A detail that I find incredibly notable is the style of stockings the maids wore in the movie. During the 50’s and 60’s women of class were known to have stockings or tights with a seam down the back of their legs; every maid in this film cleans houses and takes care of children with these very seamed-stockings on. The hair of the maids is also something to take note of. In this time period black women, particularly older women, had hair pieces that had to be removed and styled every night then pinned on in the morning. Even though the maids faced the horrible heat of the South, were serving families, and worked nine to ten hour shifts, their appearance was not to be
sacrificed. On the other side of the spectrum the viewer sees bright floral patterned dresses with bows and buttons fashioned to the tee that don conservative, white women with the perfect shoes and accessories to match every outfit. To coordinate with the perfectly detailed attire, the light make-up complete with rosy cheeks, wing-tailed eyes, and colored lips almost complete the look of sophistication and class. Also, one must not forget to note the amazing hair styles featured in this movie. Every single character, from young children to older adults, has a perfectly cut and styled hairdo. For example: the villainess, “Hilly Holbrook,” dons multiple beehives and teased hairstyles that match perfectly with every outfit or dress she wears. In this film, Hilly and the women she associates herself with are even known to say, “The higher the hair, the closer to heaven.” The women also make sure that their husbands look as put together and well kept as they do. No man leaves the house without hair product in his tapered and trimmed hair. The men’s sleek and classy hair styles coordinate perfectly with their tailor-made suits. Every family and/or couple in this movie is put together like matching doll sets. Clearly, the set and costume designer of this movie took great pride in their work to go the extra mile in researching the time this movie was set in. With details so specific and accurate, it is almost impossible for the viewer to not believe that they were transported back in time to the 1960’s.

Often times, great comedies result from great writing. This movie is no exception. The script, which was based on an award winning novel by Kathryn Stockett, spreads the history of serving women in the south during rough civil times by hiding it behind effective comedy. In one scene in particular “Minnie,” one of the maids seeking revenge on “Hilly,” bakes what seems to be one of her famous chocolate pies. Little does “Hilly” know that the pie is loaded with a
surprise inside, a surprise the same color and texture as chocolate meringue. “Hilly,”
unknowingly consumes not one, but two large slices of “Minnie’s” feces. When “Hilly”
discovers exactly what she has just swallowed, “Minnie” revels in the sweet satisfaction of
revenge. Viewers respond to the infamous pie scene with immense laughter and a light disgust
all at once. Also, the chocolate pie incident serves as insurance to make sure that no one ever
found out that the book, Help, was in fact written about Jackson, Mississippi. In another scene,
the women and their escorts attend the Jr. League’s annual Christmas Fundraiser. At the event,
which was planned by “Hilly,” numerous events happen to her causing big laughter. In one
incident someone anonymously wins her one of “Minnie’s” chocolate pies in the silent auction
right after the big incident. Secondly, “Hilly’s” dress, which was homemade, is publically ruined
by the intoxicated woman who married her ex-boyfriend. The majority of the comedy derives
from the wonderful writing of the script, also the actor’s wonderful comedic timing help make
the writing come to life.

This movie is one for the books. It appeals to all audiences; viewers who appreciate films
pertaining to civil rights will thoroughly enjoy this movie. Also, for those of us who note
wonderful set and costume design, this film is definitely one to be intriguing for its wonderful
accuracy. Lastly, for the viewers looking for good laughs, this movie will satisfy expectations as
it is not just a chick flick. The Help should be seen by all. It is a movie that portrays the true
hardships of colored women in the south in a comedic and entertaining way.
Star,

Thank you for your review of *The Help*. I haven't seen this movie yet, but I've received good reviews of it from students every semester since it's come out, so hopefully I'll get around to watching it in the near future. Your organizational skills have significantly improved since the first in-class essay. I like that your thesis statement mentions a specific audience as well as points of support that correspond directly to your three body paragraphs. Good improvement overall!

The primary thing I'd like you to focus on in your coming papers is specifying and elaborating on your explanations. Each paragraph in this essay has a fairly detailed illustration. However, the explanations, in comparison, seem very short and vague, which creates a sense of imbalance in the essay.

Your explanations could be expanded according to the question posed by the prompt: WHY will this film appeal to its intended audience? For instance, in your first body paragraph, you do a good job of explaining how the movie "helps the viewers realize that we are all equal." *Why* is this particular message going to appeal to a contemporary audience? Perhaps the answer to this seems obvious to you, but never assume that illustrations are going to speak for themselves. Perhaps this message can be easily related to racial, sexual, or political minorities who are still experiencing some sort of disparagement today, and therefore the film creates an emotional investment in viewers who are members of or know members of a particular minority group? How do you think you might expand the explanations in your other two body paragraphs accordingly?

My other suggestion is that you should either specify the point of support related to your second body paragraph to include set design or remove the illustrations regarding the houses, lawns, cars, and windows, which doesn't relate back to costume design. Makeup could also be mentioned in the thesis statement. Really great illustrations in this paragraph, though!

Really good work overall. I believe you are capable of writing an A paper in this class, which is quite difficult to do. You have organization down. Now just work on bulking up your explanations.

Mr. Knippen