

Smith, G. (2010). "It's just a movie": Why you should analyze film and television. In What media classes really want to discuss: A student guide (chapter 1). Retrieved from: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/templeuniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=557321>.

Synopsis

In the reading, the author asserted that nothing is accidental in TV and films. Every aspect of media has purposeful intent, and the viewer should review all content with an analytical and thoughtful eye. He went on to discuss that most cinema and television “can be conceptualized as sender-message-receiver,” a form of communication based on how well the intended audience received the creator’s message or point they were trying to make (p. 5). However, he argued that media shouldn’t be reduced to how well a person understood the creator’s message. In fact, Smith contended that it’s the audiences job to “interpret the film according to their lives, their experiences, [and] their tastes” in order to truly enjoy and understand media (p. 6). The author also highlighted the importance of “reading into” all media, not just complex, thought provoking pieces, by stressing the idea that even simplistic stories can “carry cultural meaning” worth exploring and analyzing (p. 9). Smith concluded his argument by suggesting that media analysis can only enhance a viewer’s experience by offering new insights and lessons learned.

Key Concepts

- **Mediamakers:** people behind the media who “work hard to exclude the random from their fictional worlds” by “carefully choreograph[ing] this random behavior” (p. 2).
- **S-M-R Model:** A model known as “the traditional understanding of speech” which “considers a sender trying to relay a message to a receiver... but she [the receiver] may not present her message particularly clearly” (p. 4).
- **“Reading Into:”** Phenomenon where “film and television rely on the audience to supply information that is only hinted at... even occurs at the simplest levels of mediamaking” (p.7).

Key Quotes

- “Nothing in a final film or television episode is there without having been examined by scores of professionals who have carefully chosen the components. You can trust that if something is in a movie, it’s there for a reason” (p. 3).
- “At times, we all express the beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions of our era without necessarily being conscious of doing so... in addition, we can unconsciously express personal issues as well as beliefs” (p. 5).
- “If your analysis produces insightful, well-grounded interpretations of a film/TV program, then that media text is definitely fruitful for analyzing” (p. 8).

Essential Question

- How has our era’s fight for representation through campaigns such as #OwnVoices affected the way we analyze and interpret media?