

Analyzing a film

Things to consider/ How to go ABOUT IT

1. What is the film about? (Give *very* brief summary and state the main theme of the film)

2. What genre is the film? (Action, adventure, drama, thriller, horror, comedy, epic (historical), musical, crime and gangster, science fiction, western or war)

3. Structure (be critical! Is this step relevant to you? Perhaps it is, e.g. if your focus is on the main character's development, and the structure evolves around exactly that. Perhaps the conflict – which is what the structure revolves around – is important in order to understand the theme(s)?)

- Important turning points in the film:

The Hollywood Model (SEE FOLLOWING PAGES)

The Plot Point Model (SEE FOLLOWING PAGES)

4. Characters, setting etc. (storytelling)

- Characterise the setting and the central characters

- Analyze symbols and point of view

- etc.

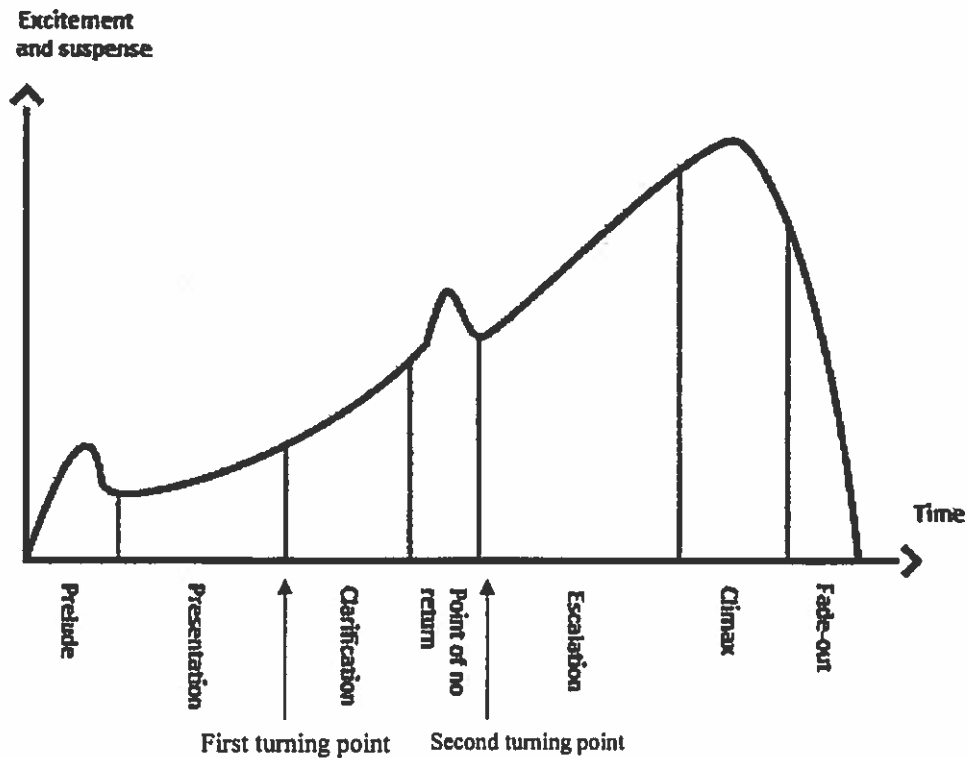
(Remember to back-up your analysis by including observations about the cinematic techniques!)

5. Choose one significant scene that shows what the film is about!

- Present an analysis of this scene and link it to the overall message of the film

- Your analysis must include observations about shot, editing, sound, composition etc. (cinematic techniques)

The Hollywood Model:



På dansk kendt som "Berettermodellen"

1. Prelude = Anslag

Must convince audience to stay with the film.

2. Presentation = Præsentation

Educates the audience so that they will be able to understand / follow film. Characters are introduced (often close-up of face) and their relationship to other characters.

3. First turning point

Change in the harmony of the film. E.g. a meteor with a deadly course is discovered.

4. Clarification / Elaboration = Uddybning

More changes. Build up of action / conflict

5. Point of no return = Point of no return

Now the main character has no way to return / go back

6. Second turning point

Provide an opening to the solution of the conflict.

After this the story escalates (= konfliktoptrapping)

7. Conflict resolution / climax = klimaks

The culmination. The show down. Where the one we sympathises with win.

8. Coda / Fade-out = Udtøning

Return to reality. Normally and easy transition to reality.

ANALYSIS OF PLOT POINTS AND ACTS

You may ask the following questions about the overall structure of a film in order to start your analysis:

- What kind of *journey/development* is the main character going through? From where to where?
- Are other characters on similar or contrasting journeys?
- How does the journey start, and who is responsible for the *inciting incident*? Why does the main character decide to go on the journey?
- Is there a difference (in setting, in the film style, etc.) between the *ordinary world* and the *special world*?
- Are the *plot points* marked in any way (stylisti-

cally or otherwise) so that they stand out and we notice?

- What kind of *obstacles* does the main character meet – physical or mental? Who sets up the obstacles?
- Based on the *journey/development* of the main character, what is the theme of the film?

GETTING STARTED

Think of a film, you have watched recently and divide it into *three acts* by pointing out the plot points in it. Comment on how the plot points make the film move forward and what kind of development the main character is going through.

inciting: ansporende
incident: begivenhed
stylistically: stilistisk, dvs. med brug af filmiske virkemidler
obstacle: forhindring

DO IT YOURSELF

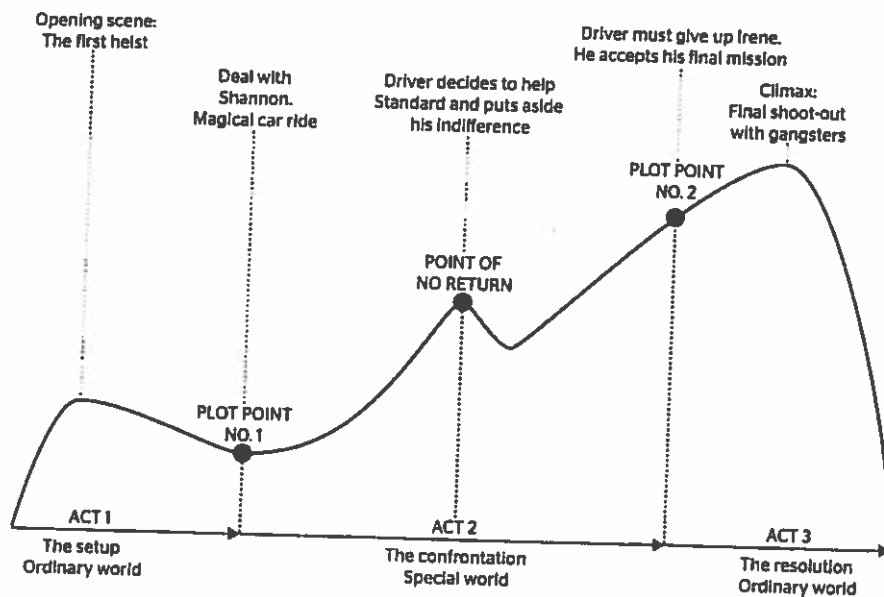
To get the most out of this chapter and to be able to see how the analysis and interpretation of a film works, you should watch *Drive* before reading any further.

Film narration: Three acts & plot points

The plot in almost any narrative film can be divided into *three acts* – the *setup*, the *confrontation* and the *resolution* (see the illustration on the next page). Films are divided into these three acts by the so-called *plot points*: Plot points are the actions or decisions that set the story in motion and push the plot forward in a new direction. Without plot points there wouldn't be a film.

The first act, the *setup*, takes up approximately the first 25 % of a film (the first 25 minutes in a 100-minute-film like *Drive*). This is where we are introduced to the main character and get to know what the film is about. Overall, we are introduced to the *ordinary world* in the film's plot. However, something happens that disrupts the peace and ordinary life; this *inciting incident* forces our main character to react in one way or another – which creates the *first plot point* in the film. Only at this point does the

narration: fortællemetode
act: akt
plot point: vendepunkt
resolution: løsning
disrupt: forstyrre
inciting: ansporende
incident: begivenhed



plot start for real. Up until then, all we have had is a presentation of characters and setting.

So, the first plot point is the start of act two: *the confrontation* (which lasts approximately 50 minutes in a 100-minute-film). This is where the main character faces a number of *obstacles* which get more and more difficult. The obstacles usually reach a dramatic highpoint in the so-called *point of no return* halfway through the film: This is where the main character is tested for the first time and has to decide whether to continue or turn back.

What is really interesting about the second act is that our main character always goes through some kind of *development*: He is on a *journey*, sometimes in a physical sense – moving from point A to point B, or looking for some kind of object, treasure, or love in the real world. He can also be on an inner *journey* – developing inside, learning new skills, or growing with the task set before him. A film often combines the two types of character development, making use of both an outer and an inner journey for our main character. Due to this development, act two is said to take place in the *special world*.

The journey (and act two) ends with another plot point which pushes the story into act three, *the resolution* (approximately the final 25 minutes in a 100-minute-film). The main character's development ends with him accepting the final test, the final obstacle, the final confrontation. This ultimate highpoint is known as the *climax* of a film, and here the main character has to prove that he has indeed developed as a character. If he has not, the film becomes a tragedy. Since the development is all over in act three, we are back in the *ordinary world*.

skill: evne