

Through the Eyes of the Director

The following are elements that filmmakers use to bring a movie to life. This guide can help you rate the effectiveness of a movie. Before watching the movie, read each category description and example comment. You and your friends may want to take notes on a separate sheet of paper during the movie. After watching the movie, review each category and ask yourself: How well did the movie use this element of filmmaking? Circle a number and also provide comments for each category.

	Excellent			Average			Poor
The Hook	5	4	3	2	1		
Explanation	<p>Movies often begin with a “hook”—something interesting in the first few minutes that draws you into the movie. For example:</p> <p>A Direct action (a shooting; the planting of a bomb; a baby being born)</p> <p>An important image (a mountain range; a spaceship floating in space; a battlefield)</p> <p>An interesting character (a single dad with eight kids; a waitress with a lottery ticket; a spy watching his target)</p> <p>As you watch the film, pay attention to how the movie attempts to get the audience interested from the very beginning.</p>						
Example Comments	<p>The beginning of <i>Back to the Future</i> was intriguing. The opening shot of Doc Brown’s clocks makes you wonder about this character, and introduces the idea of “time.” When Marty walks in, you become even more interested because you wonder what connection he has to this place.</p>						
Your Comments							

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	Excellent		Average		Poor
Images	5	4	3	2	1
Explanation	What you see in a movie can have a major impact on your overall experience. Pay attention to important images, the use of color, where on the screen the images appear, and how long certain images remain on the screen. Also be aware of camera movements and how they affect your interpretation of a scene.				
Example Comments	The long, far away shot of the prairie near the end of the movie gave a peaceful but lonely feel. The constant use of dusty images and yellowish-brown colors also made the tone of the movie nostalgic and a little sad.				
Your Comments					

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	Excellent		Average		Poor
Characterization	5	4	3	2	1

Explanation

Characterization refers to the way a screenwriter establishes and develops a character. You can learn things about a character by their appearance, their actions, their dialogue, and how other characters react to them. Also pay attention to how characters change throughout the movie, and what causes them to change.

Example Comments

The characterization of the main character was excellent. The way he spoke—very rapidly and breathlessly—let me know that this was a nervous but intense person. His unique sense of fashion told me that he was very eccentric, which was a major part of his personality.

Your Comments

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	Excellent		Average		Poor
The Story	5	4	3	2	1

Explanation

Think about what you liked and disliked about the story itself. Was this a unique story or something you've seen many times before? Did the story "fall apart" at any point, or was this an entertaining story all the way through? Was it told in a straightforward way, or did the movie use flashbacks or tell the story out of order?

Example Comments

The story in this movie was a little bit predictable. You could see the "twist" coming from a mile away. If it was more surprising, I think this would have been a better movie overall. However, I like the fact that they set up a sequel with the events of the very last scene.

Your Comments

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	Excellent		Average		Poor
Sound	5	4	3	2	1

Explanation

In a movie, sound can add a whole new dimension to a story. Sounds can directly represent what is happening on the screen, such as the sound of glass breaking during a car accident. Sound can also appear as music placed over a scene, such as screeching violins to indicate that something scary is happening. And sometimes a filmmaker will choose to use no sound at all. Think about how effectively sound is used to enhance the movie.

Example Comments

I liked how it was completely quiet except for the sound of dripping water as they entered the house. This made me feel very tense. But then when the music started building, I knew something bad was about to happen. I almost think it would have been scarier and more surprising if the filmmakers would have not used music in that particular scene.

Your Comments

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	Excellent		Average		Poor
Big Ideas	5	4	3	2	1
Explanation	<p>Apart from the plot (or <i>what happens</i>), most movies have some other <i>big ideas</i> or themes. What big ideas do you see running throughout the movie? Which of these ideas could connect to real life? Also think about what the overall message of the movie might be.</p>				
Example Comments	<p>This movie consistently refers to the idea that people can change if they really want to. The main character is someone who thinks she is in a situation she can't get out of, but she realizes that sometimes you have to turn to friends for help. She was very proud about this at first, but by the end she understands that life can get better when you can humble yourself to ask for help.</p>				
Your Comments	<div></div>				