W04 Essay: Perceive the Elements of a Film

HUM 110: Introduction to the Humanities

Arthur Rueda. Mentor: felicia hanosek

## Overview

Write a paper that explains the Elements of Film within Citizen Kane.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Go through Aristotle's elements and take notes on how they apply to this film clip:
   1. Plot: What can you tell about the plot from this small excerpt?
   2. Character: Describe what you know about the main character.
   3. Thought: What thoughts is the filmmaker trying to convey?
   4. Diction: There is only one-word spoken-how would you describe the diction of that word?
   5. Music: What does the music sound like, and how is it used?
   6. Spectacle: What techniques of spectacle, or cinematography, are used?
2. 40 points possible. You will receive up to five points for each paragraph you write, graded according to the following scale:
   1. 5 points - The response shows evidence that the clip was viewed multiple times and that the elements and how they relate to the film were carefully pondered.
   2. 3-4 points - The response shows a moderate engagement with the film and application of the element to the film.
   3. 1-2 points - The response is shallow and shows minimal engagement with the film and application of the element to the film.
3. In addition, your instructor will assign you up to ten points for the quality of your descriptive writing in all of your paragraphs.
   1. Up to five points for mechanics-sentence structure, spelling, grammar, etc.
   2. Up to five points for the quality of your descriptive prose.

# SHORT INTRO

These are one of the best 3:11 in cinema, followed by one of the worst 20 minutes in cinema until the story unfolds when Kane grows old guided by the bank mentors. The intro has outstanding elements that I will further explain, answering the requested format questions, but following the narrative goes down inexplicably. The early minutes build tension, and then some shaky direction trailed questionable dialog with unpleasant characters until you make sense of the information. You never like the characters because everyone is flawed. You are watching cartoon-like characters that begin to develop in gray-tones of unsavory characters. If you survive the first minutes, they present you with a great plot set in standard time with occasional flashbacks. The movie is hard to understand, and the story's message is that choices are everything, and all people are hateable with the lense of Orson Welles. It is a perfect critique of society, capitalism, fake values, and existence.

# QUESTIONS

Plot: What can you tell about the story from this small excerpt?

You think there's a mystery/suspense or thriller coming up because the atmosphere is gloomy/dark and weird. You also need to know why Kane died and the reason for saying "rosebud" as the last words. This intro is a perfect set-up for a thriller. However, the next part of the movie is unnecessary, confusing, and lengthy. Everything clarifies when the flashback start and the characters develop adequately. You imagine this is the main character dying old at the beginning of the movie.

For this reason, you presume you are going for a ride of the drama behind him passing by himself. This movie's story-telling is ahead of his era, being from 1941, except for the shaky 15 minutes after the 3-minute intro.

Character: Describe what you know about the main character.

All the characters in this movie are unlikable. You notice that Kane is old and died alone in a secluded castle-like structure. Little did you learn that he is the least unlikable character of the movie. Every character is unlikable. They started as one-dimensional characters that you hate less when you know them. Kane has many flaws, but it the end, you feel his pain as he wanted to go back to life with his family before they sent him to live away from his family. You also feel sorry for the main character for dying alone. Then you hate the protagonist with all your heart as he was a spoiled child/adult, but in the end, you forgive him as the tragedy unravels. There's a bit of nostalgia in the scene.

Thought: What thoughts is the filmmaker trying to convey? The filmmaker attempts to maintain the mystery or thriller of the "rosebud" words until the end. You also wonder about the reasons to make the characters so unlikeable. Wells made all the characters very unlikeable so you can relate to the protagonist because it's the less unlikable one. You know the intro sets the tone of the whole movie. You realize the main character has money and ends up dying alone.

Diction: There is only one-word spoken-how would you describe the diction of that word?

Kane's last word is "rosebud," One-word monologue. You know that it is so important to him because he said that with his final energy. I thought here that he was killed with poison from a plant or that somehow something flowery was involved. It seems like this is the end for him. I also notice that the last word is not whispered. It seems dubbed poorly or shouted. I suspected a questionable sound effect but, at this point, wondering if it was intentional. It was not as I watched the entire film. It turns out that the last word was vital for the movie plot.

Music: What does the music sound like, and how is it used?

The music sets up a dark late-night atmosphere in a secluded place. The score and cinematography correctly set the mood for this movie in an era without special effects. Nature sounds, and a horn are blowing as background noise. It starts as a mystery movie. The sound effects have many unfamiliar tones that seem to be generated by a church organ instrument. It sounds like an old movie intro. Then the rolling snow globe shot with breaking sound effects. Perfect ambiance.

Spectacle: What techniques of spectacle, or cinematography, are used?

The film starts with a still-shot of a property's fence sign that pans upwards with prodigious effects for the 1940s. You immediately perceive that persons living there don't want to socialize in any way as everything is secluded. As the camera jumps the fence and pans in, you see a "still-shot effect" that tries to show you some zoo cages with exotic monkeys and a castle-like structure in a hill. This shot looks creepy as the atmosphere has fog, and it has different levels of dark tones. The next reel shows a pier/shore/bay/dock with some gondola/kayaks/canoes showing the castle-related structure in the background upside-down. This effect is perfect to set a gloomy, sinister, foggy scene. Another shot of an animal or gargoyle statue with a bridge or moat structure adds tone to a great intro. We cut back into another picture with a bench, a flag, a park, and the same castle-like facility; we seem to be getting closer to the castle. Following next, an alternative image of an unrecognizable edifice that appears like a mausoleum with some gazebos. At this point, you wonder if you are watching a horror movie, the suspense is building. Now you want to know who lives inside the castle and is up this late at night. I've only seen this mastery compared to Alfred Hitchcock movies, for example, Vertigo.

# References

https://www.amazon.com/Citizen-Anniversary-Ultimate-Collectors-Blu-ray/dp/B0050G3NWG

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_Kane>