

AP World - Critical Film Review [FINAL 2018]

What is it?

The real circumstances behind a dramatization based on fact are often more complicated than can be portrayed in a 90-minute or even 3-hour film. However, the only exposure most people may have to an important historical event probably comes through a TV show or movie, not through reading historical accounts from multiple perspectives. It is therefore important to be able to engage critically with dramatizations of history.

The AP World History critical film review assignment is designed to supplement student knowledge of a particular historical period, person(s), event, or institution through the analysis of a related film. This is an opportunity to experience a richer encounter with history, as well as connect the rise of cinema as a prominent facet of world cultural history. Historical films open up history to people. Films provide viewers a unique insight to events that we may never have the opportunity to experience. And although no movie can be entirely accurate, when done well, filmmakers can immerse audiences into a world lost in time, captivating our attention and connecting our understanding to history beyond the classroom.

Parameters:

You are going to compare and contrast the film version of an event to the actual events on which it is based. You will need to differentiate elements based on factual accounts from elements based on interpretation. In addition you need to judge how much alteration to the historical narrative is justified in order to produce a good film or TV show, as opposed to what need not have been altered. You will need to watch a film, and then select appropriate historical readings that present the same event. You will need to **write a 1,000 – 1,500 word article** that compares and contrasts the film and the historical readings. A bibliography, or list of resources used, needs to accompany the essay citing all materials you consulted. On the day of the final, students will engage in a class discussion to share their film, historical understanding, and experience with the project.

The Truth – Actual Historical Event or Time Period:

Research the true history of the historical event, person(s), time period, or institution portrayed in the film. You may want to begin with a film review site for an overview of the film, but this site will NOT provide students with the historical background, or content needed, to complete the review assignment. Use textbook material and connect to classwork, but you are expected to conduct additional historical research into your topic. Include primary and secondary sources, where applicable, in your writing (and be sure to cite all research properly in your bibliography).

The Film – Details:

Write a quick list of the following information:

- Title of Film (Year Produced)
- Genre
- Director
- Main Characters and Actors
- Awards (nominations or wins)

The Film – Plot:

Write a synopsis, or summary (2-3 paragraphs), of the film. Make sure that your summary makes sense to a reader who does not know the movie. Do not refer to specific scenes and do not try to explain everything.

You must also include the next items, but not as different parts (they may be included in your description of the story)

- **Place and time:** Where does the action take place? When does the action take place? (present time, 19th century) Is the story chronological (according to the order of time) or flash back?
- **Background:** society, country, kind of people (age, culture social class), historical time, etc.
- **Primary Argument:** most films, via decisions made by the directors, producers, writers, actors, etc., have a specific point of view or narrative they are hoping to get across to the audience

Comparison & Evaluation:

To what extent is the film historically accurate? Identify specific accuracies and director's liberties with the film. How has the film furthered student knowledge of the history portrayed?

Provide an evaluation of the film. Give your opinion, but it must be more than "I liked it." This is important as the reviewer can express the elements of the movie they enjoyed or disliked. However, as in all good journalism, the reviewer should also give impartial details, and allow the reader to make their own mind over an issue the reader liked or disliked. Opinions should be explained to allow the reader to determine whether they would agree with your opinion.

Movie Selection and Process:

Students will choose 1 film from the list provided. Please note some of the films are rated "R." You must have parental consent prior to viewing. "R" ratings are primarily for language and/or violence. If you come across a movie that is not on the list but is historically relevant to the course of study, bring it to my attention for approval. Students can sign up in groups, no larger than three, to watch, research, and discuss the same film, but each student is responsible to submit their own, original article.

View the film at least once, but try to watch it two or three times if possible. Make a basic outline of the historical setting of the film, using the following questions:

- When does action take place?
- What dates are referenced within the story?
- How much time passes between each scene?
- Make a list of the main characters, and divide them into those that have a historical basis, and those that were invented by the dramatists for the purpose of narrative.

After viewing the film, find scholarly articles, historical sources (primary and secondary), and movie reviews that discuss, critique, evaluate, or assess the history and the dramatization.

Extra Credit - Viewing Guide:

Students can make a one page (front and back) graphic organizer (with a completed key) to be used for future students as a viewing guide. If working in groups to watch the movie, the collective group may work together, create, and submit one viewing guide.

General Grading Rubric Criteria:

- Historical Narrative – details, and explanation of the historical facts and connections
- Films Details and Plot – summary and description of the movie
- Comparison and Evaluation – accuracy and opinion of the movie
- Research – quality, quantity, and analysis of source materials (both historical and popular)
- Format – length, grammar, spelling, mechanics, and **CREATIVITY** (have fun with the assignment)

Other Reminders:

Important note on writing: the reader understands you are writing this review; therefore, do NOT use 1st or 2nd person personal pronouns (I, me, us, we, you). This is a formal writing assignment—be sure to check your work for grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling errors.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is never ok. Do NOT copy another writer's work. All reviews are to be TYPED, single spaced, and are subject to submission to online plagiarism checkers. Students will receive a grade of 0% on work that is plagiarized, parent phone call, referral to administration.

Citation/Bibliography: All resources must be cited, MLA format, particularly your discussion of the actual historical events.