

Features of a film

Just as we study a novel, short story or poem and look at individual features such as language, setting, character etc, we separate aspects of the film in order to appreciate more clearly how it has been put together.

And, as with all literature (of which the study of film is a part) the most important feature is the theme (while the other features are designed to bring out, emphasize, show theme).

These are the main features we look at:

1. **Character:** what they look like, how they speak, what they do, what happens to them. There are main character (three dimensional) and minor characters (two dimensional) whose purpose is often to contrast with the main characters or act as a symbol.
2. **Setting:** time and place eg age (such as 1930s or in the future), day or night, country, area. All these communicate specific ideas which have an impact of the atmosphere and therefore the message.
3. **Plot:** Film makers carefully select which information and in what order the audience will see the story. This order determines our response/attitude to the characters and therefore the message.
4. **Production Techniques:** these are lighting, props, sound (including music), special effects, costume, the use of colour, camera angles etc. Film makers carefully arrange the above to emphasise an idea or to create (or add to) a particular atmosphere.
5. **Dialogue:** sometimes a narrator is used to communicate or comment on the action; what characters say (or don't say) is important – every word counts.
6. **The title:** will be linked to the story or the message. Can sometimes be a pun or another type of word play but usually be have extra (sometimes hidden) meanings.
7. **Theme:** most films have a number of ideas they explore. Often this is connected to something a character learns and therefore what we learn.