

2017/2018 APUSH Film Review Summer Break & Winter Break Assignment

PART 1

Critical Film Review Assignment

The APUSH 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 American 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.

For the film reviews, students are responsible for critically viewing the work, evaluating historical accuracy, and writing an overall evaluation following the guidelines provided. Students will be expected to complete 6 total film reviews; students may choose only 1 film per section. Film Reviews will count for a summative grade, 1 per semester. 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.

- I. Colonial Era – Foundations of America (1492 – 1820s)**
 - 1776 (1972) – Declaration of Independence debate & signing (G)
 - 1492 (1992) – Columbus and the discovery of the New World (PG13)
 - John Adams (2008)—HBO series of John Adams
 - Last of the Mohicans (1992) – French & Indian War (R)
 - The Crucible (1996) – Salem witch trials; Puritans (PG13)
 - The Patriot (2000) – Revolutionary War (R)
 - Amistad (1997)—Trans Atlantic Slave Trade (R) (includes nudity & racial violence)
 - Roots – Path of Diversity in America

- II. Jacksonian Democracy/Civil War & Reconstruction (1824-1877)**
 - Gettysburg (1993) – decisive battle of the Civil War (PG)
 - Glory (1989) – Civil War; African-American regiment 54th Massachusetts (R)
 - Gone with the Wind (1939) – Antebellum and Civil War South (PG)
 - Lincoln (2012) – President Lincoln & the Civil War (R)

- III. Immigration & American Frontier (1800s)**
 - Gangs of New York (2002) – Civil War era cities and immigrants (R)
 - Far & Away (1992) – Immigration & Western Frontier Land Grab (PG13)
 - Tombstone (1993)— Law & Order on the Western Frontier (R)
 - True Grit (2010) – Law & Order on the Western Frontier (PG13)
 - Wyatt Earp (1994)—Law & Order on the Western Frontier (PG13)
 - Little Big Man (1970) –Sand Creek Massacre (PG)
 - The Alamo (2004) – Texas Revolution (PG13)

- IV. Early Twentieth Century / Culture (1900 – 1950)**
 - Inherit the Wind (1960) – Scopes “Monkey” Trial (PG)
 - The Great Gatsby (2013) – 1920s Social Life (PG13)
 - Cinderella Man (2005)—1930s working class (PG13)
 - Citizen Kane (1941)—Turn of the Century Newspaper Tycoon (PG)
 - Raging Bull (1980)—Italian-American subculture (R)
 - Seabiscuit (2003)—Horse Racing & the Depression Era (PG13)
 - The Untouchables (1987)—Al Capone & the 1920s (R)
 - To Kill a Mockingbird (1962) – Racism & the Great Depression (PG)

V. Civil Rights (1900-1980)

- 42 (2013) – Jackie Robinson & Civil Rights (PG13)
- The Help (2012) – Civil Rights Movement (PG13)
- The Butler (2013) – Civil Rights Movement (PG13)
- Selma (2014) – Selma March/Civil Rights Movement (PG13)
- Hidden Figures (2016) – Women’s Rights/Civil Rights Movement/Space Race (PG)
- Iron Jawed Angels (2004) – HBO - Women’s Suffrage

VI. World War II & Vietnam (1941 – 1975)

- Band of Brothers (2001) – HBO series World War II, 101st Airborne
- Good Morning, Vietnam (1987) – Vietnam War (R)
- Letters from Iwo Jima (2006)—WWII Pacific (R)
- Patton (1970)—WWII General (PG)
- U-571 (2000) – WWII Atlantic (PG13)
- Pearl Harbor (2001) –World War II (R)
- Saving Private Ryan (1998) – World War II (R)
- Tora, Tora, Tora (1970) – Pearl Harbor (PG)
- Red Tails (2012) – Tuskegee Airman (PG 13)

VII. Cold War Era (1945-1991)

- Apollo 13 (1995)—1970s Space Race (PG)
- Dr. Strangelove (1964) – Cold War arms race (PG)
- Charlie Wilson’s War (2007) – 1980’s Afghanistan War & the US/Russian relations (R)
- Good Night, and Good Luck (2005)—McCarthyism & the Red Scare (PG)
- J. Edgar Hoover (2010)—FBI director Hoover & the Cold War (R)
- All the President’s Men (1976) – Watergate investigation
- Miracle (2004)—1980 Olympic Games (PG)
- October Sky (1999) –Post Sputnik; boy meets rocketry (PG)
- The Majestic (2001) – McCarthyism; Hollywood blacklisting (PG)
- Bridge of Spies (2015) – Cold War Berlin, Germany (PG13)
- Thirteen Days (2000) – Cuban Missile Crisis (PG13)
- Argo (2012) – Iranian Hostage Crisis (R)

Summer Film Study (from groups I - II):

2 reviews due no later than Friday, September 8th. You may turn in at any time prior to due date.

1st Semester Film Study (from groups III-V):

3 reviews due no later than Friday, January 12th. You may turn in at any time prior to due date.

2nd Semester Film Study (from groups VI-VII):

2 reviews due no later than Friday, April 6th. You may turn in at any time prior to due date.

APUSH Film Review Format

Student Name
Date Submitted
Class Period
Title of Film (Year Produced)
Genre
Director
Main Actors
Awards (nominations or wins)

The Truth

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. For research, students should use print or online resources such as Hippocampus—excellent short videos! —at <http://www.hippocampus.org>.

The Film

Plot: Write a synopsis, or summary, 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.

Comparison & Evaluation:

1. To what extent is the film historically accurate? Identify specific accuracies and director's liberties with the film.
2. 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.*

FYI

Important note of 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 GUMS (grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling) errors. All resources must be cited in Chicago format.

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 turnitin.com. Students will receive a grade of 0% on work that is plagiarized, parent phone call, and referral to administration.

Sample Film Review

John Doe

May 25, 2012

1st Block

Pocahontas (1995)

Animation, Adventure, Drama

Mike Gabriel

Mel Gibson, Christian Bale, Billy Connelly

The Truth:

Pocahontas was daughter of Powhatan, the chief of the Algonquian Indians in Virginia, near Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement. In 1607, the English leader of the Jamestown settlement Captain John Smith was taken captive of the Algonquian Indians. During a ritual ceremony in which the chief feigns to bludgeon the captive, John Smith was “saved” by the chief’s daughter, Pocahontas, when she covered his body with her own in a dramatic display of saving him. Following the mock execution and saving of Smith, Powhatan took Smith as an honorary member of his family; Pocahontas and Smith became friends. Over the next year, relations with the Algonquian and English remained friendly and mutually beneficial via trade; however, by 1609, hostilities grew between the American Indians and English. Injured in a gunpowder explosion, Captain John Smith was forced to return to England, subsequently eroding existing relations. In 1613, Pocahontas was initially taken as captive of an English settlement in the Jamestown community; enjoying relative freedom within the community, Pocahontas began studying Christianity and formed a friendship—and later romance—with the tobacco pioneer John Rolfe. With Powhatan’s consent, and following her baptism and adopting of the English Christian name Rebecca, Rolfe and Pocahontas married. A general peace and a spirit of goodwill between the English and the Indians resulted from this marriage. In 1616, Rolfe, Pocahontas, and their son Thomas returned to London to much fan-fare as Pocahontas’ arrival generated a fire-storm of interest. She was presented to King James I and even reunited with her friend John Smith, whom of which she believed to be dead. In 1617 the Rolfe family returned to Jamestown; however, Pocahontas did not survive the journey, dying of pneumonia or tuberculosis. Historians widely credit Pocahontas for not only serving as a representative of the Virginia Indians, but also as a vital link between the American Indians and the Englishmen. Without her courage and friendship, many believe Jamestown would have suffered much more greatly, perhaps even the same fate as the doomed Roanoke colony.

The Film:

Set in 1607 colonial America, Disney’s Pocahontas captures the early relationship of the Algonquian Indians with the Englishmen, and their arrival at Jamestown. The first half of the film depicts the English as gold-hungry settlers woefully prepared for conditions of the Virginia terrain, poor relations between the American Indians and English, and the saving of Captain John Smith by Pocahontas. As a burgeoning friendship and love affair develops between Smith and Pocahontas, the chief’s daughter, rivalries between the groups over land threaten the survival of Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in America. Smith and Pocahontas work together to bring peace to their communities, each acting as a liaison.

Comparison:

Overall, the relationship between Smith and Pocahontas in the Disney film is fairly accurate as she does save Smith from execution, although truly this was more of an act of ceremony than an actual threat to his life. And though they do develop a strong friendship that helped bring peace and prosperity to the Jamestown colony, Smith and Pocahontas never fall in love or marry, as depicted in the sequel. Whereas Pocahontas was only 12 years old when the English arrived and therefore the physical portrayal of Pocahontas is quite exaggerated in the film, the depiction of Jamestown, the gold fever, and rivalries are fairly on target thereby providing audiences an accurate visual of colonial life at the turn of the 17th century. Considering Pocahontas is an animated Disney film, the storyline is well done: the animation and music are appealing and “kid” friendly, the love story is believable and strong, and the history is worthwhile for audiences to learn from.

Works Cited:

Kelso, William M. "Jamestown Rediscovery: an introduction." *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40, no. 1 (2006): 28-32. doi:10.1179/174581306x156454.

"Pocahontas (1995)." IMDb. Accessed May 11, 2017. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114148/>.

APUSH Summer Assignment Part 2

- Read the interview “Why Students Should Study History” between Howard Zinn by Barbara Miner. Answer the thought questions as you read.
http://u5.schoolwires.net/cms/lib03/IL01905100/Centricity/Domain/2317/Zinn_WhyStudyHistoryEDITED.pdf
- Some conservative historians and authors criticize Zinn and his admittedly leftist leanings. This link takes you to an article by conservative author Daniel Flynn. Please read his critique of Zinn’s book and answer the thought questions. <http://www.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=17914>
- Written work is due the first day of class. It should be typed, double-spaced, and clearly labeled. This should be in your own words and demonstrate proper grammar and spelling. This work is to be done INDEPENDENTLY. There should be no collaboration or sharing of ideas. Violations will receive a grade of zero and possible honor code violation.

Thought questions for the Zinn interview:

1. Do you agree or disagree with Zinn’s comment “I can make an argument for knowledge for its own sake as something that can add to your life?” Why?
2. Zinn seems to criticize the concept of offering a yearlong class in state history. Georgia requires it. Do you think it is necessary? Why/why not?
3. Find a summary of the Mexican War. (Make sure and note your source!) React to Zinn’s criticism of how the war has historically been taught. Is he right? Did your source mention the Mexicans’ perspective and/or opposition to the war at home?
4. Zinn says teachers should give their opinions in class. Do you think this is appropriate in a high school course? Why/why not?
5. Do you think you can ever really know what it was like to be a slave? Why/why not?
6. Should we put as much focus on conflict between groups within the United States as we put on conflicts between the US and other nations? Explain your reasoning. Why is the later usually done more often? Explain.
7. Respond to Zinn’s idea of “affirmative action in education”. Are there any groups of people in the US who are still left out of the story of our country?
8. Zinn says “Objectivity is neither possible nor desirable. It’s not possible because all history is subjective; all history represents a point of view. History is always a selection from an infinite number of facts and everybody make the selection differently, based on their values and what they think is important.” If that is true does it excite you or scare you about the study of history? Explain your position. (Think about this idea when you read “Silas Deane”.)



Thought questions for the Flynn article:

1. Compare and contrast Zinn's and Flynn's interpretations of the American Revolution. Which one do you agree with more? Why?
2. Flynn says "For every major figure or event that was motivated by economic interests, there are scores that were not". Give at least two examples.
3. Find a summary of the Pequot War. (Make sure and note your source!) Was that source's summary closer to Flynn's or Zinn's summary of the conflict? Explain the similarities and differences.
4. What criticism does Flynn put forth of Zinn as a writer? HINT: if you do this as a student in my class you will be in big trouble!!
5. Flynn criticizes Zinn for leaving several important historical events out of his book. Would these omissions make sense under Zinn's "affirmative action policy"? Explain.
6. Which one of these men would you rather have as your history teacher? Why?