

Chapter 7 – Genre films

Genre	We enter a world...	Emotions activated	Conflicts addressed
Science fiction	Altered by time, technology, or aliens	Awe, wonder, fascination, fear, dread	Human values vs. technology, civilization vs. aliens
Western	Where law and community must be rugged, individual men; the land is both precious and dangerous	Respect or admiration for tough men and expansive landscape, awe at natural beauty	Civilization vs wilderness, frontier rules vs. rule of law (eg vigilantism vs due process); community vs individual
Gangster	Revolving around men whose ambition spills beyond the law, for which they often pay the price	Respect or admiration for self-willed individuals, identification with greed, egotism, ruthless tactics	The rule of law vs survival of the fittest, due process vs taking law into one's own hands, loyalty vs betrayal
Mystery	Full of intrigue, false clues and a mystery to be solved	Anticipation, second-guessing, problem-solving skills, suspicion, suspense	Identification and isolation of perpetrators who threaten the social order
Thriller	Where individuals must strive to achieve goals against severe, life-threatening odds and, often, a time limit	Tension, anxiety, anticipation, suspense, thrills, shock, relief	Threats and challenges to the individual vs individual skill and determination; threats to the social order vs heroes who can overcome them
Horror	In which dangerous figures or spirits, sociopaths, or evil threaten individuals who have little external help	Fear, suspense, horror, shock, surprise, disgust, repulsion, relief	Anxiety and doubt about self-worth; irrational or intangible threats vs our ability to overcome them
Musical	That revolves around song and dance, exuberance, spontaneity, togetherness and love	Joy, happiness, delight, pleasure, escape, affection, light-heartedness, release	Everyday, numbing routine, kill-joys and sour-pusses vs zest, joy, carefree spirit, and community
Film noir	Where trust and honesty prove rare, seduction and betrayal abound; no one can be trusted; darkness engulfs people	Suspicion, worry, anxiety, distrust, fascination, admiration, attraction, wariness, caution	Distrust and instability vs trust and a stable social order; a secure masculinity vs threats to male identity

Melodrama	Where the emotional intensities of family dynamics receive close attention	Worry, concern, distress, empathy, moral judgment, sadness, sorrow, distrust, hope	Family as a haven vs family as hell; benevolent vs malevolent figures
Comedy	In which situations and events lead to comic, humorous results	Light-heartedness, amusement, laughter, frivolity, delight, release of aggressivity	Decorum vs indignity; predictability vs unpredictability
Adult	In which situations and events lead to prolonged sexual interaction	Sexual arousal	Sexual propriety vs sexual license

- Genre films thrive on conflict

Categorizing genre films

- Genres that address the social order and public sphere: the world of politics and social policy
 - Western, war, science-fiction
- Genres that address the domestic order and private sphere: the world of interpersonal relationships and family ties
 - Romantic comedy, horror

Condensation

- Loading something with more meaning or importance than it would normally receive
- Usually packs a variety of values and meanings into a single signifier or image
- Eg traditional symbols
 - National flags
 - Christian cross
 - Nazi swastika
- Forcefully concentrates tension, conflict, and emotional energy into a single figure

Displacement

- Shifting tension, conflict, and emotional energy from its primary source to a secondary, less inflammatory focus
- Eg collective issues -> personal issues
 - Political issues -> moral issues
 - Political power -> personal authority

Basic conflicts:

- Urban development vs rural escape
- Class struggle vs social mobility
- Individualism vs community
- National autonomy vs fear of external threats