

STAR WARS: EPISODE IV A NEW HOPE

I chose to make Star Wars your first assignment because it's a film that I assume most of you are familiar with (if you're alive and live in the English speaking world). However, just because you've watched the movie 20,000 times does not mean that you have thought about it critically. By choosing familiar ground, I'm hoping that you can go beyond the initial "getting to know you" viewing to help you follow plot quickly and move more easily into considering the artistic and technical aspects of the movie. Remember, movies do not magically appear in theaters; they are the result of a great deal of careful thought and design. Someone made this movie, and he or she is trying to get a certain response from you as a movie goer. As you answer these questions (carefully, thoroughly, demonstrating critical thinking and writing skills), remember that you're being led...there are film techniques designed to give an impression or get a response. Be aware of them.

You're going to need to do this on a separate sheet...I do not care if you hand write or type. I will not be grading this on grammar or elegance. I care about 2 particular things: 1.) Did you understand the question and answer what I asked? 2) Is your answer clear and coherent?

- In a few sentences (or more), discuss the opening sequence of the film as exposition. Consider the meaning of exposition. How does this scene set up the themes and plot of the entire film? What does it immediately tell the viewer?
- Re-watch the confrontation in the bar during the cantina sequence and break it down in terms of how the director "tells" his story. What does the sequence tell you about Luke's character? About Obi Wan's? What technical "tricks" are used to get those things across?
- Consider ONE of the following characters' introductions (their first appearance in the movie): Obi Wan Kenobi or Han Solo. Watch how they first appear – their surroundings, their costumes, their actions, their dialogue. What does the introduction tell you about the character?
- The score of the film (by John Williams) is a vital part of the cinematic experience. Pick out one scene in which the score seemed particularly important (whether in a good way where it supported the film, or in a bad way where it took you out of the cinematic experience).
- Having briefly discussed editing and the composition of shots in class, where did you notice the way shots were put together or editing played a part? (Please note, "I didn't notice" isn't an answer for this...pay attention, pick a sequence, and describe to me what the editing did to explain plot, character, or tone).

- The character of R2-D2 is interesting enough to consider particularly. Most of the normal avenues of character development (facial expression, body language, dialogue) are not available to the director; however, RD-D2 emerges as a unique and memorable character. How does the film create this character? What techniques/ cinematic elements are used?
- What technical aspects of the movie *worked* in making it effective?
- Who was your favorite character in the film? Why? What actual *technical* elements did the film maker use to help you reach that conclusion?
- What was the film *about*? Justify your answer.