Oct. 10th, 2015

Heavenly Creatures (1994)

Directed by Peter Jackson

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Although the film focuses more on Pauline Yvonne Reiper, her best friend Juliet Marion Blume can also be seen as one of the protagonists.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Pauline and Juliet begin a friendship that is manic and obsessive. Their parents are worried about how the girls act when they’re with each other and think that they may even be in a homosexual relationship, which was very much taboo in the early 1950s.

1. What is the tone of the film?

The whole film has a very imaginative, dreamlike quality to it. As the film progresses, the lighthearted fantasy fades to darkness and rage. The suspense leading up to the murder is anxiety inducing and is created without the help of music making you squirm in your seat in anticipation for the horrors that lie ahead.

1. What is the theme?

An intense friendship between two wildly imaginative teenaged girls that ends in a gruesome homicide.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 I have never experienced a friendship quite like the one between Pauline and Juliet, so while I could comprehend their motives and actions, I couldn’t really relate to them.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

There are a few things that I can take away from this film. For instance, the camera angles and techniques were very interesting and inspiring; the vivid imagination, such as their clay characters coming to life and interacting with reality, truly helped the audience understand the world that the girls created and lived in; and the suspense that is created without the use of music at all.

Oct. 11, 2015

Kids (1995)

Directed by Larry Clark

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 The film follows a group of teenagers living in New York City, although there is very little plot, Jennie can be seen as the protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 In a time the AIDS epidemic was in full swing, the kids in this movie felt as though they couldn’t contract the virus, however, when Jennie finds out that she was infected with HIV from her first and only sexual encounter with a boy named Telly, she tries to track him down before he can transmit the disease to anymore unsuspecting girls.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 The film is shot almost like a documentary. Almost all of the camerawork is handheld and the characters feel natural and realistic. However, the story, especially the last fifteen minutes, is both bleak and disturbing.

1. What is the theme?

 A day in the lives of arrogant, naive teenagers living in New York City during the AIDS crisis.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Very much so. The way the characters talked, acted, and dressed made them feel very real and authentic; some of the characters in the film reminded me of kids I knew in high school.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The realism. The characters were played by actual teenagers, the dialogue was how teenagers really talk, and the documentary style filmmaking made the whole film feel like we were following around a real group of kids in New York. In my film, I want the characters to feel real and authentic.

Oct. 12, 2015

Slumdog Millionaire (2008)

Directed by Danny Boyle

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Jamal is the protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 There are numerous conflicts including Jamal being accused of cheating, attempting to find his lost loved ones, trying to rescue his damsel in distress, along with more minor conflicts.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 Fast paced, romantic, exhilarating, and it keeps you on the edge of your seat.

1. What is the theme?

 An underdog from the slums of India climbs the ranks in the Indian version of Who Wants the be a Millionaire.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 In a way, yes. Jamal was a warm and loving person trying to take care of his loved ones. The only character that I struggled to relate to was Salim, but I could understand him as a character and his motives.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 A character overcoming obstacles and rising from the slums to achieve greatness. The cinematography was beautiful as well and I’d love to emulate some of the shots I saw in the film.

October 13, 2015

Mysterious Skin (2004)

Directed by Gregg Araki

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Both Neil McCormick and Brian Lackey can be seen as the protagonists of the movie.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 The two main characters deal with their own conflicts before they meet towards the end of the film and realize that they stem from the same childhood trauma. Neil is an apathetic, gay teen prostitute who engages in risky sexual encounters and Brian is a shy, asexual young man who believes he was abducted by aliens when he was a little boy and regularly experiences blackouts and nosebleeds.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 I feel as though since there were two varying storylines during the first three fourths of the film, there are different tones. Neil’s story is angry and dark and Brian’s is more mysterious. The end of the film however is disturbing and heartbreaking.

1. What is the theme?

 Teenagers trying to cope with severe childhood trauma.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Yes and no. While I related to some aspects of the main characters, there were a couple of incidences that made it difficult for me to relate to. The character that resonated with me the most was Wendy, Neil’s best friend.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The beautiful cinematography that accompanies the unsettling storyline. The film opens with fruit loops falling slow motion in the air and slowly pans down to a little boy who is smiling as the fruit loops rain down. It was clips like this that really added to the film.

Oct. 15th, 2015

Moonrise Kingdom (2012)

Directed by Wes Anderson

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Both Sam and Suzy can be seen as the protagonists.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 The two run away together and a search party is sent after them;once they were caught they were separated.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 Like most of Wes Anderson’s films, the characters are very quirky and somewhat dysfunctional, the cinematography is bright with lots of symmetry, and a lot of the actors appear in many of Anderson’s other features.

1. What is the theme?

 Two preteens are penpals and hatch a plan to run away together during one summer, but the girl’s family and the boy’s boy scout troop are on a mission to locate the lovebirds.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Yes and no, I could relate to some aspects of the characters, but I felt like some characteristics were a little too exaggerated for me to really connect with them.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The cinematography is truly beautiful. While I’m not sure if I want to work as much with vibrant colors like Anderson, I would like to try out some of his filmmaking techniques and styles.

Oct. 16th, 2015

The Basketball Diaries (1995)

Directed Scott Kalvert

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Jim Carroll is the protagonist of this film, which is based off of the autobiography of the same name.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Jim is a star basketball player who slowly devolves into the world of drug addiction after he tries heroin for the first time.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 The film really takes you into Jim’s world. It starts out bright to show you how promising his life was, but as the film goes on, everything gets darker, the people and places get dirtier and more sinister. It’s not until the very end until it lightens up again, but it is never as bright and vibrant as the first quarter of the film.

1. What is the theme?

 A young writer and basketball player slowly becomes a heavy drug user and begins to spiral out of control.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 While I’ve never experienced drug addiction, Jim is a very relatable character. It’s very easy for anyone to slip into the world of addiction, and Jim felt like a real person, someone that you could easily run into on the street.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The darkness that Jim’s world and the film slowly fades to, the heart wrenching realness that this film had, and the dialogue shared between the characters sounded real and authentic.

October 17th, 2015

Gummo (1997)

Directed by Harmony Korine

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Although there is absolutely no plot in the film, Solomon is one of the primary people that the film focuses on, and could be considered the protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Since there isn’t much plot, there is no narrative. The only real conflict of the film is the tornado that destroyed the town before the events of the movie took place.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 Bleak, unsettling and it looked like a documentary about a real town in Ohio.

1. What is the theme?

 Residents of Xenia, Ohio are devastated by the destruction that a tornado that struck the town, and the kids and teenagers attempt to do anything to relieve their boredom.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 No, but I feel like I have met or could meet people like the characters in this film. They are very real and felt authentic, probably because most of them weren’t actors and were random people Harmony Korine pulled off of the street.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 I think this might be perhaps the film I will reference the most while writing my story. The angsty bored teenagers, the dark and disgusting atmosphere, and the realness of the film as a whole.

Oct. 18th, 2015

Over the Edge (1979)

Directed by Jonathan Kaplan

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Carl is the primary protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 There is a large population of teenagers in the small town of New Grenada, and the adults and police instead of catering to the kids’ needs, ignore and oppress them. The teenagers’ frustration grows inciting a riot.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 It’s one of the few “teen movies” that feels real. The angst, raw emotion, and the anger areall incredibly genuine and palpable. And even though, it was made almost forty years ago, the way teenagers feel hasn’t changed much at all. The lethal combination of being both apathetic yet exploding with a varying array of emotions is still felt today by young adults.

1. What is the theme?

 Teenagers riot after being subdued by the adults in their community.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Yes. I’ve felt the same as the characters and understand their motives and actions. If you have ever been a teenager, I feel like you can relate to a handful of the characters in this film, or at least some aspects of them.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The teenagers felt, acted, and talked like teenagers. Their emotions slowly bubbled up until they exploded and a literal riot broke out. Teenagers can be wild and explosive and while most teen films focus on quirky, awkward romances, Over the Edge is the kind of teen film that I want to reference while making my film.

Oct. 19th, 2015

Good Will Hunting (1997)

Directed by Gus Van Sant

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Will Hunting is the protagonist. (Obviously)

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Will is a math genius, but works as a janitor at a college. He gets arrested repeatedly, and must go to a psychologist and work with a professor to keep him out of jail. Through therapy it is revealed that he has psychological issues stemming from his abusive childhood, which interferes with his work and love life.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 This film is a drama and the themes discussed in the film are heart wrenching.

1. What is the theme?

 Pride, self-destruction, and attempting to overcome trauma from childhood.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Yes, Will is a very relatable character. He could do great things with his extreme intellect, but pulls back from the challenges due to his numerous defense mechanisms established when he was physically abused as a child.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The witty, well written dialogue and the realistic character development. And the cinematography was amazing. I will definitely keep a lot of the aspects of this film in mind while writing my film.

Oct. 20th, 2015

Menace II Society (1993)

Directed by the Hughes Brothers

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Caine is the protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Caine’s life of crime starts to catch up with him. Violence begins to break out all around him as he starts to wonder if he should leave and start a new life for himself.

1. What is the tone of the film?

The film has waves of a gritty, bleak drama and peaks of dark humor. The characters are real, dysfunctional, and all have their own issues. The cinematography is spectacular and the end of the film is completely disheartening.

1. What is the theme?

Caine is growing up in the projects of Watts, California, and growing up in the life of crime is starting to grow more and more dangerous.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Yes and no. While I could somewhat understand the characters motives and actions, it was difficult for me to relate to them. I’ve never lived a life of crime, so I’ve never had to deal with the same struggles that the characters did.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The violence and anger the characters felt and acted upon as well as the stunning cinematography. One of the most stunning scenes to me was when Caine’s father shot someone while playing a game of poker. The whole room was lit with red lights giving it an odd and sinister look and feel.

Oct. 21st, 2015

The 400 Blows (1959)

Directed by François Truffaut

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Antoine is the protagonist.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 After beginning a life of crime, Antoine gets arrested by police. His parents decide to let him pay the consequences and send him to juvenile detention.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 The film is somber and poignant. This boy lives his life being ignored and typecasted by everyone around him as just a trouble maker and lost cause. It’s terribly tragic.

1. What is the theme?

 A neglected young boy delves into petty crime.

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Antoine is very much relatable. Labelled simply as a troublemaker by those around him, the audience really gets to perceive things through his eyes. We get to see that there’s more to him than just a nuisance.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 The entire film is one that I will reference while writing this film. The cinematography was brilliant, two scenes I particularly liked were one towards the beginning of the film where Antoine is sitting in his mother’s room looking in her mirror. In front of him is a small mirror in front of a much larger on, and off to his right is a tall mirror. You can see his reflection in three different angles in one shot. The other scene I enjoyed was of course the end scene when Antoine escapes and flees to the beach, where he sees the ocean for the first time. It’s beautifully poetic.

Oct. 22nd, 2015

We are the Best! (2013)

Directed by Lukas Moodysson

1. Who is the protagonist of the film?

 Bobo is the primary protagonist in this film.

1. What is the conflict that drives the narrative?

 Bobo, Klara, and Hedvig start a punk band, but are belittled by those around them and conflict begins to brew within the band.

1. What is the tone of the film?

 It’s anarchistic, angry, and cheeky. The girls have a raw energy and emotion that translates well into punk music. And the film in a whole has a genuine feel to it. The soundtrack, the cinematography, and the dialogue was really spot on.

1. What is the theme?

 Three punk girls start a band in spite of everyone telling them to give up because “punk is dead.”

1. Are the characters relatable? Why or why not.

 Out of all of the films I have watched, I related to these characters the most. Maybe that’s just because I grew up in punk music and was an angsty teenaged girl just like them. I guess technically I still am. But the characters in this film are very believable. The dialogue down to the way they dressed and held themselves.

1. What can you take away from this film that might benefit you as you write this story?

 This film almost makes me want to switch my focus to preteen girls instead of boys. Although almost all of my ideas stem from stories of my brother and his best friend, I feel like I will be able to write girls better than boys. But instead of changing my idea completely, I think I come up with an idea for a subplot, because I think that I would really enjoy writing strong female characters like Bobo, Klara, and Hedvig.