



A BAKER'S DOZEN

Questions for Reading a Film

Watching a film carefully means watching it actively. You can't simply plunk yourself down in a theater, popcorn in hand, and let the images wash over you for a couple of hours. Rather, to watch a movie actively, you must learn to read the screen, to ask yourself questions as you watch, to notice the elements which make a film succeed or fail. There are many possibilities, but here's a baker's dozen that will get you started:

1. Does the beginning of the film get your attention and interest?
2. Are you able to "suspend disbelief" -- able to forget that you are watching a film rather than witnessing real-life experiences?
3. Do the characters seem real?
4. When the actors talk, do they seem involved in real conversations or are they just reading lines?
5. Do the characters' actions make sense in the context of the film?
6. Does the story move along, keeping your attention all the way?
7. Is the story confusing?
8. Does the story build to an exciting climax?
9. Are any scenes unnecessary -- in particular, violent scenes just inserted for their own sake?
10. Do the sets, lighting, and camera shots add to or detract from the film?
11. Do the sound effects and music add to or detract from the film?
12. Does the film end in a logical place -- or stop too soon or go on too long?
13. Is it a good film -- and why or why not?