

The Western Genre

I. Apply Gene Autry's Cowboy Code to your selected western film.

1. A cowboy must never shoot first, hit a smaller man, or take unfair advantage.
2. He must never go back on his word or a trust confided in him.
3. He must always tell the truth
4. He must be gentle with children, the elderly, and animals.
5. He must not advocate or possess radically or religiously intolerant ideas.
6. He must help people in distress.
7. He must be a good worker.
8. He must keep himself clean in thought, speech, action, and personal habits.
9. He must respect women, his parents, and his nation's laws.
10. The cowboy is a patriot.

II. Explore the development of the western genre. Using what you know about writing a comparison/contrast essay, select an additional western to compare to *High Noon*, studied in class.

- A. Choose another classic western and compare it to *High Noon*. Suggested films: *The Searchers*, *Shane*, *Red River*, *Gunfight at the O. K. Corral*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, and *Pale Rider*.
- B. Choose a revisionist western and demonstrate how the film takes the typical elements of western genre and revises them or comments on them. Suggested films: *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *Unforgiven*, *Dances with Wolves*, *The Wild Bunch*, *The Shootist*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Silverado*, and the so-called "spaghetti westerns" of Sergio Leone (*A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More*, and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*).
- C. Choose a parody western and describe **in detail** how the film makes fun of the characteristics of the typical western. Suggested films: *Blazing Saddles*, *Cat Ballou*, *Rustler's Rhapsody*.
- D. Watch a movie that is not – on the surface at least – a western and write an essay that explains why this film is indeed a typical western. Possible films include *Star Wars*, *Outland*, *The Road Warrior*, and *Water World*.

III. Write a solid analysis of the opening scene of your chosen film, making sure to discuss all the ways in which that opening scene is used to establish the genre. How much information about the story and characters does the filmmaker provide there? What can you tell about the film from the setting, costumes and makeup, and props depicted in the opening scene?