

Film Analysis/Film Review Essay

Writing the Classic Funnel-Shaped Introduction

Funnel-shaped introductions do not literally look like a funnel on the page; rather, they begin by introducing the topic of the essay and then narrow/focus the topic through the statement of a thesis, and then often provide a preview of the supporting subtopics.

Orientate the Reader/Introduce the Topic/

Define the Circumference of Your Funnel's Mouth

Begin by stating the director's name (he/she is ultimately responsible for film), the title of the film, its production date. Name the starring actor(s). Identify the genre of the film (comedy, drama, chick flick, etc.) Describe the source of the film's story (a novel, a short story, a real-life story etc.)

Example:

Franco Zeffirelli's 1990 *Hamlet* retells William Shakespeare's tragic story of a Danish prince who returns home to find his father murdered and his mother remarried to the murderer. The film stars Mel Gibson as Hamlet, Glen Close as Gertrude, and Alan Bates as Claudius.

The famous rhetorician Kenneth Burke described academia as a giant parlor conversation in his book *Philosophy of Literary Form*. A parlor is a formal living room.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

(Note: Burke published *Philosophy of Literary Form* in 1974. Notice his use of only male pronouns. Today, most scholars choose to mindfully write with gender-inclusive language.)

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You have not likely read reviews or analytic essays about the film you viewed for this class; however, you have discussed the film with your teacher and your classmates. Your conversation has been with your class. Narrow/focus your introduction by identifying the specific question you are answering in your essay:

Many of my classmates questioned . . .

My classmates and I discussed . . .

Many/some/a few viewers discuss . . .

Many/some/a few viewers argue . . .

Many/some/a few people question . . .

Example:

Many viewers are quick to question the success of a film based on a play solely on its adaptation of the play they know so well.

Continue to orientate your reader by summarizing what others have said about the film in one to three sentences. Use the term viewer to identify people who have seen the film.

They say . . .

Many viewers say . . .

Some viewers say . . .

Other viewers say . . .

Example:

Others compare Zeffireli's production to Laurence Olivier's 1948 film production of Hamlet. I think Zeffireli's production should be judged on a wider set of criteria.

Identifying the question your essay addresses metaphorically narrows your funnel-shaped introduction. You are getting closer to the spout.

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Stating Your Thesis/Forming Your Spout

A thesis consists of a topic and a viewpoint. Your thesis is your response to the question you have chosen to answer. The topic of your thesis is not the whole film; rather, it is the narrowed topic of the question to which you are responding. Your viewpoint is your answer to the question.

Literal funnels narrow and direct the flow of liquid. A funnel-shaped introduction focuses or directs the flow of your readers' thoughts.

Example:

Zeffireli's production is tremendously successful film.

Providing a Preview/Listing Your Main Ingredients

A funnel-shaped introduction is really complete with the thesis; however, many readers like to know the supporting points of the essay, like eaters like to know the ingredients in a container of food. A preview statement is like a simple food label. It lists the main ingredients, the major supporting subtopics included in the essay. A preview may be attached to the thesis or it may be a separate sentence

Example of a Preview Attached to a Thesis:

Zeffireli's production is tremendously successful film because of the screenwriters' adaptation of the original play, the location of the filming, and most of all the film's cast.

Example of a Separate Preview:

Elements contributing to the film's success are the screen writers' adaptation of the original play, the location of the filming and most of all the film's cast.

Example of a Whole Introduction

Franco Zeffireli's 1990 *Hamlet* retells William Shakespeare's tragic story of a Danish prince who returns home to find his father murdered and his mother remarried to the murderer. The film stars Mel Gibson as Hamlet, Glen Close as Gertrude, and Alan Bates as Claudius. Many viewers are quick to question the success of a film based on a play solely on its adaptation of the play they know so well. Others compare Zeffireli's production to Laurence Olivier's 1948 film production of *Hamlet*. I think Zeffireli's production should be judged on a wider set of criteria. Zeffireli's production is a tremendously successful film because of the screenwriters' adaption of the original play, the location of the filming, and most of all the film's cast.
