Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film

Screening Worksheet
Chapter 5: Acting

1. In the movie (or clip) you are analyzing, which factors seem apparent: the screenwriter’s role in creating the major character? the context (historical, political, etc.) in which that character was created? the challenges faced by the actor in representing this character on the screen?

2. Why was this actor, and not another, cast for the role?

3. Does the actor’s performance create a coherent, unified character? If so, how?

4. Does the actor look the part? Is it necessary that the actor look the part?

5. Does the actor’s performance convey the actions, thoughts, and internal complexities we associate with natural or recognizable characters? Or does it exhibit the excessive approach we associate with nonnaturalistic characters?
6. What elements are most distinctive in how the actor conveys the character’s actions, thoughts, and internal complexities: body language, gestures, facial expressions, language?

7. What special talents of imagination or intelligence might the actor have brought to the role?

8. How does the actor rely on the filmmaking process in creating the character?

9. Does the actor work well with his or her fellow actors in this film? Do any of the other actors detract from the lead actor’s performance?

10. How, if at all, is the actor’s conception of the character based on logic? How does the performance demonstrate “expressive coherence”?

11. Does the actor’s performance have the expressive power to make us forget that he or she is “acting”? If it does, how do you think the actor achieved this effect?