Lesson 6 – Trailers and Persuasive Writing

1. Read what is required in the first paragraph of a film review
2. Read an example of a first paragraph of a film review
3. Discuss points that stand out
4. Play a theatrical trailer for *Shawshank Redemption*
5. Did this trailer make the film appealing? What makes the audience want to go and view the film from this trailer?
6. Watch again and stop and start – pointing out key features and persuasive techniques
7. Students will then start drafting their own first paragraph of the film review

**Resources**

**Required in the first paragraph of a film review:**

**Opening: Catch the reader’s attention**

Think about how advertisements sell movies: “trailers” show you a few seconds of the movie to get you interested.

When you begin your movie review, make your own “trailer.” If you liked the movie, then your trailer should make people want to see it. If you didn’t like it, then your trailer should explain what you didn’t like about the film. Remember, you are trying to make the reader side with you. If you liked the film then you are going to make the reader want to like the film.

Begin your review by retelling an incident or moment from the movie which you think captures the spirit of the movie as you understood it.

*Alternative:* *begin your review with another kind of story or interesting fact – about one of the star actors, or about the making of the film, or about the director.*

**Example of first 2 sentences:**

A story of hope is just about the last thing you'd expect to find in a prison movie. However, in *The Shawshank Redemption*, that's exactly what you get.

**Theatrical trailer for *Shawshank*:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0RZNIFZxoY>

**Persuasive features and techniques:**

* Starts with a crucial moment
* Narration over fast cutting scenes (short, punchy sentences)
* Black out to build dramatic tension
* Use of key quotes:

“They send you here for life, and that’s exactly what they take”

“I believe in two things: discipline and the bible”

“I didn’t (commit a crime) since you ask”

- What do these quotes do?

They portray the personality and role of the characters:

**Red** is insightful, omniscient and the narrator

**The Warden** is cruel, strict and religious

Hinting to **Andy’s** innocence and uniqueness – making him appear likable in the trailer

\*\*\* Point of curiosity

* Use of key camera techniques (walking into Shawshank the dramatic low angle shot establishes the looming and foreboding nature of the prison **\*\*\*not giving away spoilers, but through these techniques we can extract plot elements**)
* Referencing key themes: (bird) freedom and hope

Hope is paired with the sweeping shot of the ocean – again not giving spoilers, but still subtly referencing the ending of the film (you could say **hope is like a great, sprawling ocean, slowly washing away the stone walls of the prison**)

* Andy hammering at the pipe – is this too much information?
* Seeing Andy in the rain with open arms – too much information again? What else could this shot be of? Remember, we want people to watch the film – we also don’t want to give away the ending
* Music is used in this trailer to create a tone (tone mimics the mood of the film) what ways can you do this in your writing?

Answer: figurative language! Film reviews can uses metaphors, allusions and puns (to name a few) outside of the techniques you describe during your analysis. Think of my ocean simile – this could easily be implanted in the introductory paragraph.

**“Hope is like a great, sprawling ocean, slowly washing away the stone walls of the prison”**

**Why it would work in the introduction:**

**- Creates a tone and supports the theme of hope without directly giving away the ending**

**- Interests the reader through appealing language**

**- Discusses the plot of the film**