

# ACADEMIC SKILLS

Week Six

Analysis Refresher Seminar I

Dr. Richard Nowell

# **Agenda**

## **Structure**

Analysis vs. Description

Movie Marketing Analysis

The *Barbie* (2023) Trailers

## **Targeted Learning Outcome**

Sharpening our Analytical Skills

# **Position + Evidence = Analysis**

Analysis can be considered a concerted and focused effort to uncover the meanings or the significance of something under examination

Analysis is often contrasted to “description”; descriptive work is often deemed because it is limited to conveying surface meanings

In other words, description stops short at saying what something is, whereas analysis posits why and how something might be the way it is

Description is therefore the first step toward analysis, but not the last: it is the evidence that we cite in order to support a position we are making

As we see in two weeks time, frontloading our work with a position or a thesis statement transforms description into evidence of our argument

# **My Imaginary Research Paper**

- Focus:** The Anglophone Marketing of *Barbie* (2023)
- Research Question:** How did Warner Bros trailers frame *Barbie*?
- Primary Sources:** *Barbie*'s three English-language trailers
- Secondary Sources:** Kernan, *Coming Attractions*.  
Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema".  
Wyatt, *High Concept*.  
Nowell, "Where Nothing is Off Limits".
- Analytical Framework:** Trailers contribute to a film's brand image, by positing attractions for targeted audiences

# **Questions to Ask about Marketing**

1. What attractions does the trailer suggest the film offers?
2. Which elements of the trailer suggest these attractions?
3. What media texts does the trailer associate with the film?
4. From what ideas does the trailer distance the film?
5. What audiences is the trailer trying to appeal to?
6. What type of film do these attractions suggest the film is?

# **Barbie: Quality Progressive Fun**

The trailers posit a multifaceted brand image intended to appeal to multiple audiences beyond the little girls associated with Barbie dolls

This objective is driven by framing the film in ways that counter the well-known critique of Barbie as an outdated oppressive girl's toy

The film is thus sold as a modern satire uniting Gen-Z liberals through its progressive politics, patriarchal critique, and inclusive recreation

It is also positioned as quality cinema wherein a female indie auteur reimagines a heritage brand to offer a smart critique of gender relations

It is even framed as a straight-male-friendly comedy replete with gross-out humor, a female sex symbol, and the stars of earlier bromances

# ***Barbie: Teaser Trailer 1***

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWMAVkiz\\_gk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWMAVkiz_gk))

# **Barbie: Teaser Trailer 1**

This positions *Barbie* in two ways for two adult audiences, both foreclose the idea this is exploitative trash for little girls

## **1. Heritage Cinema for Mature Female Audiences**

- ❑ Older actress as voiceover
- ❑ Parody of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1969)
- ❑ Spotighting Barbie dolls as groundbreaking nostalgia

## **2. Smart Inclusive Satire for Gen-Z Liberals**

- ❑ An auteur piece from a female indie director
- ❑ Centralizing marginalized groups, poking fun at men
- ❑ Colorful camp aesthetic a la *Drag Race*, *Bake-Off*





# **Barbie: Teaser Trailer 2**

- ▣ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRyt3Ov4zz0>

# Barbie: Teaser Trailer 2

Forecloses the idea of Barbie as oppressive toy for little girls

## 1. A Risqué Comedy for Thirty-Something Straight Guys

- ❑ Sex appeal of Robie, as star of earlier male-oriented films
- ❑ Stars of earlier male-oriented fare: Ferrell, Cera, Gosling
- ❑ Crude, quasi-homophobic, humor
- ❑ Pokes fun at the absurdities of the Barbie universe

## 2. Politically-Engaged Inclusive Production

- ❑ Centralizes women as socially dominant individuals
- ❑ Emphasizes inclusion of black, lesbian, transgender talent
- ❑ Mocks homoerotic aspects of male-on-male aggression



# ***Barbie: Main Trailer***

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBk4NYhWNMM&t=89s>)

# ***Barbie*: Main Trailer**

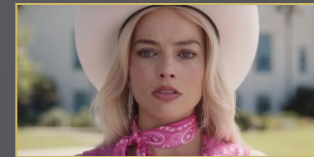
This trailer re-mobilizes the brand facets of the teaser trailer to position *Barbie* as a female community-building product

## **1. Feminist Satire**

- ▣ Positions *Barbie* as a vehicle for critiquing real-world male entitlement, misogyny, and self-indulgence
- ▣ Positions Barbie as a force of female existential awaking, promoting sisterhood on the screen and in front of it

## **2. Meta-Cinematic Neo-Feminist Girl Power Celebration**

- ▣ It also promotes *Barbie* as a vehicle for female recreational celebration, defending its combination of fun and politics



# **Take-Aways**

Once we have a viable topic, research question, primary sources, and secondary sources, the next step is to analyze our primary sources

Whereas description stops short at discussing what something is, analysis also tries to explain why and how something is what it is

This situation reminds us of the importance of **frontloading** our work with an assertion of our position (also known as a thesis statement)

Once we start with a thesis statement – what we concluded about why something is the way it is – description is transformed into evidence

The *Barbie* trailers show us how a description of content and address suggests why this film's brand image was angled to multiple audiences

# **Next Time**

**Date:** 02.11.2023

**Instructor:** Sarka

**Topic:** Work-in-Progress Seminar 1

**Outcome:** The Strengths and Potential Issues of Our Provisional Research Projects

**Preparation:** Prepare a **brief** overview, to be delivered in class, of the current state of your research project.