

HKDSE Literature in English SBA

Commentary on SBA Project Titles

| Code | Title | Comments |
|------|---|--|
| A | Explore the theme of entrapment <i>Rear Window</i> (1954) and <i>Disturbia</i> (2007) | <p>The theme of entrapment is clear and focused. It is also central to the films. The choice of films is good. The comparison is potentially interesting and may bring out some original points about <i>Rear Window</i>.</p> <p>However, <i>Rear Window</i> is a film with a lot of online resources available and may lead the student to ‘borrow’ ideas too heavily from these resources at the expense of originality and, in worst case scenario, this may lead to plagiarism. This may also lead to a lop-sided comparison with most of the project discussing <i>Rear Window</i>.</p> <p>The wording of the title could be better. It is strange to write it as an imperative. Also ‘explore’ is very vague and may lend itself to a lack of focus.</p> |
| B | An Analysis of the Functions of Voyeurism in Alfred Hitchcock’s <i>Rear Window</i> (1954) | <p>The choice of films is good. The theme of voyeurism is a clear and has a narrow enough focus. It is also central to <i>Rear Window</i>.</p> <p>However, <i>Rear Window</i> is a film with a lot of online resources available, particularly this theme, which is arguably the most obvious theme of the film, and may lead the student to ‘borrow’ ideas too heavily from these resources at the expense of originality or, in worst case scenario, this may lead to plagiarism.</p> <p>It is unclear what ‘functions’ refers to in the title. This would have to be defined clearly for it to be a successful project and may be an unnecessary complication.</p> |
| C | How is nonlinear time expressed in <i>Arrival</i> ? | <p>The choice of film is good. <i>Arrival</i> has the added bonus of being relatively new. It is, however, quite a difficult film conceptually so may not be suitable for all students.</p> <p>The theme of non-linear time is clear and has a narrow enough focus. The theme is also central to the film. However, it may run the risk of being overly-technical and thus may over-rely on one particular online article or resource for its ideas.</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | <p>The title may have been better re-phrased to include an element of the student's own appraisal of this aspect of the film. Also 'expressed' is probably the wrong word; 'presented' is probably what the student means, though this is not clear.</p> |
| D | <p>How do the use of camera, lighting and colour convey the protagonists' emotional states in Sofia Coppola's film <i>Lost in Translation</i>?</p> | <p>The choice of film is good. The focus of the film is on character, relationships and alienation in an Asian country rather than the plot. This makes the choice of the title of the project appropriate. In that way the focus on 'emotional states' is also appropriate.</p> <p>However, the phrase 'the use of camera' would seem to be a gloss for cinematography. As such cinematography, lighting and colour is a loose and generic focus for the project. It could be applied to almost all films, though it is probably too generic to allow students to produce something of the highest quality.</p> <p>The title may have better been rephrased to guide the student to include his/her own appreciation of the film as the title may lend itself to a descriptive project.</p> |
| E | <p>The Self and Its True Nature in <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i></p> | <p>The choice of film is good. <i>Silence of the Lambs</i> is often praised for its depth of characterisation, the portrayal of the relationship between the two protagonists and the actors' performances – all within the popular genre of psychological horror. This title potentially taps into all of this.</p> <p>However, the title runs the risk of being too general. In order for it to be a successful project, the student would need to define 'The Self' very tightly as well as 'The Self's True Nature'. This would seem to require some in-depth knowledge of psychology. In doing so, it may run the risk of being overly-technical and thus may over-rely on one particular online article of resource for its ideas. Alternatively, it may end up describing these in a vague manner thus limiting the insights it can make about the film.</p> |
| F | <p>How does symbolism in the film "Moonlight" reflect the protagonist's development?</p> | <p>The choice of film is good. However, it has been the subject already of a number of SBA projects, most of which have been related to similar themes/topics. Students who choose this film may run the risk of producing work that lacks originality or at worst plagiarism.</p> <p>The theme itself is appropriate, although it is somewhat general and generic. The student would have to provide a clear definition of 'symbolism' and possibly further limit the</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | scope of the project to craft a coherent argument (rather than a disparate list of different symbols present in the film). |
| G | Joker's cyclical descent into conformity in Stanley Kubrick's <i>Full Metal Jacket</i> | <p>The choice of film is good. The transformation from rebel to conformity in the setting of the army/war is central to the film and continues to be relevant more than 35 years since its release.</p> <p>However, <i>Full Metal Jacket</i> is a film with a lot of online resources available and may lead the student to 'borrow' ideas too heavily from these resources at the expense of originality or, in worst case scenario, this may lead to plagiarism.</p> <p>In this case, 'cyclical descent into conformity' is clearly not the student's own words or his/her own original idea. As such it requires to be correctly cited even in the title. If the concept of 'cyclical descent into conformity' is from one particular source, the project, of course, runs the risk of plagiarism or lack of originality.</p> |
| H | How performance is used in 'The Greatest Showman' to present the overarching theme of 'blindness' | <p><i>The Greatest Showman</i> is a popular musical drama from the last decade, though is not universally considered to have great literary merit. The choice of film itself may limit the profundity and eventual success of the project.</p> <p>Having said that, the choice of the popular genre of musicals is an interesting one and to be done well it would almost certainly entail the analysis of the lyrics of the songs, the interaction between the lyrics, the music, possibly the dancing and set as well as the actors'/singers' performances. However, the wording 'how performance is used' creates the suspicion that the student does not have a clear conception of what 'performance' means. Added to that, the theme 'blindness' is not one that would seem to be explicitly referenced in the film. This may lead to the student arguing for the importance of a theme that may in fact not be present.</p> |
| J | The Evolution of One's Dark Side in <i>Black Swan</i> | <p>The choice of film is good. The portrayal of what can crudely be called the 'dark side' of the protagonist is central to the film. The themes of anorexia, intense pressure and perfectionism in young women continue to be relevant today.</p> <p>However, the title itself lends itself to description rather than analysis or appraisal. The phrase the 'Dark Side' runs the risk of setting up a simplistic dichotomy more</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | appropriate for a superhero film (like <i>Batman</i> or <i>Star Wars</i>) rather than a nuanced analysis of aspects of the protagonist's character. |
| K | The use of humour in <i>Get Out</i> – a film analysis | <p>The choice of film is good. <i>Get Out</i> is often praised for its humour and political satire all within the popular genre of horror. As such, a focus on the humour of the film is appropriate, though the student would need to build a coherent argument rather than simply exemplifying different funny moments in the film. The film's humour often relies on a knowledge of Afro-American life and politics in the USA as well as the related language features. As such, it may not be suitable for all students.</p> <p>The wording of the title could be better: 'the use of' is potentially problematic as it is so general. Also '-a film analysis' is unhelpful. We know it is a film. We know an SBA project will be an analysis. So, this adds nothing.</p> |
| L | Does war falter human conscience in "Schindler's list (1993)"? | <p>The choice of film is good. However, <i>Schindler's List</i> is a film with a lot of online resources available and may lead the student to 'borrow' ideas too heavily from these resources at the expense of originality or, in worst case scenario, this may lead to plagiarism.</p> <p>Most critically, though, the title is incomprehensible due to the misuse of the verb 'falter'. Even if we are able to interpret 'falter' as meaning something like 'hamper' or 'diminish', the question itself would seem overly simplistic given the weighty subject matter of the film. It is also framed in a way that generalises all experience in war to a nonsensical degree. The student would be better narrowing the focus down, for instance, to one character or group of characters in the film, in order to discuss the issues in a more specific and meaningful way.</p> |
| M | "Chance and Destiny" in <i>Forrest Gump</i> | The film was an award-winning film on its release and remains extremely popular. However, it is a film that is best described as being fairy tale-esque and should not be analysed as one would a realistic drama. This means that students who choose this film should be wary of treating it as if the plot and characterisation etc. are realistic or with the same degree of complexity that a realistic film contains. Higher achieving students may want to choose a film of a more challenging nature than this in order to display the full range of their knowledge and ability. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | The title here is also too general. It sets up an existential dichotomy. Such grand, vague topics will often lead to students making sweeping arguments or alternatively putting forward so simplistic an argument that it will limit the success of the project. |
| N | Significance of the beginning part of <i>The Bridge To Terabithia</i> | <p>The film is a fantasy drama pitched at children. Such a choice of film can lead students to all of the possible limitations described above for <i>Forrest Gump</i>.</p> <p>The scope of this title is extremely limited. It would have to be an exceptional SBA project and exceptional student to be successful with such a title. For this project to be successful with this title, it would mean that the student displayed an in-depth knowledge of the film and an extremely detailed description of filmic techniques etc. present in the opening scene. It would also need to relate it systematically to the major themes of the film. In doing so, it would need to build an argument that avoids simply listing different ways that the opening scene foreshadows something later in the film.</p> <p>As such, such a title makes it extremely difficult for the student to succeed.</p> |
| P | Presentation and examination of life and death in <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i> and <i>The Theory of Everything</i> | <p>The student has chosen two films related to life-threatening illnesses or conditions to compare. Other than that, the films would seem to have little in common. In order to succeed with this title, the student would have to work extremely hard to create insightful comparisons of aspects of the two films that would illuminate both films. The danger would be that the student simply presents one film and then the other with no meaningful comparison.</p> <p>The topic is far too general: ‘life and death’ could literally include all aspects of human life and death. It also remains unclear what ‘Presentation and examination’ refers to. It is unclear whether it is the film makers or the student who is ‘presenting’ and ‘examining’ and what the difference is between the two.</p> |