

Male Gaze

Name:

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Introduction

In this worksheet you will learn what the Male Gaze is and how it influences our society.

 **Have you ever heard of the Male Gaze? Think about what this term could mean and write down your thoughts.**



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The Male Gaze: How the media shows the world from a male perspective

Have you ever noticed that women are often portrayed very differently to men in films, series or advertising? This is often due to the so-called male gaze. This term was coined by film scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975. It describes how women in visual media are often not shown as independent characters with their own plot, but rather as pretty objects - in other words, as something to be looked at. This is because many films and works of art are told from a male-dominated point of view. Men are usually shown as active heroes who act and make decisions, while women tend to take on a passive role and are often staged through their bodies. This can be seen, for example, in camera angles that emphasize certain parts of the body or portray women in such a way that they appear more decorative than driving the action.

This pattern is not new - it has existed in art and culture for centuries. It has shaped our visual behavior, often without us consciously noticing it. But if we look at it and question it, we can discover new, more diverse ways of telling stories. The more people become aware of how women and men are portrayed differently, the sooner things can change - towards stories in which everyone can act on an equal footing.

 **Explain in your own words what the Male Gaze is.**

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Der Male Gaze im Film


Der Begriff "Male Gaze" wurde erstmals von der britischen feministischen Filmtheoretikerin Laura Mulvey in ihrem Essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) eingeführt. Mulvey argumentiert, dass die Darstellung von Frauen in Filmen oft aus einer männlichen, heterosexuellen Perspektive erfolgt, die Frauen als sexuelle Objekte für das Vergnügen des männlichen Zuschauers darstellt. Diese Perspektive zeigt sich in der Art und Weise, wie Frauen von der Kamera, den männlichen Charakteren im Film und dem Zuschauer betrachtet werden.

In der Geschichte des Films war der Male Gaze oft ein Mittel, um patriarchalische Ideologien zu verstärken. Frauen wurden häufig in passiven Rollen dargestellt, die nur dazu dienten, die Handlung des männlichen Protagonisten voranzutreiben oder seine sexuellen Fantasien zu erfüllen. Diese Darstellungen spiegelten und verstärkten gesellschaftliche Normen und Geschlechterrollen, in denen Frauen als untergeordnet und als Objekte männlicher Begierde betrachtet wurden.

Die Darstellung von Frauen im Film folgte oft bestimmten Mustern: Frauen wurden als schön, aber passiv dargestellt, ihre Körper wurden sexualisiert und fragmentiert gezeigt. Diese Visualisierungen etablierten die Rollen des dominanten Mannes und der untergeordneten Frau, indem sie die Frau als passives Objekt für den aktiven männlichen Blick darstellten. Diese Darstellungen wurden von männlichen Filmemachern und Produzenten geschaffen, die die Filmindustrie dominierten und ihre patriarchalischen Werte in ihre Werke einbrachten.

Der Einfluss des Male Gaze erstreckt sich auf viele spätere Werke im Film. Filme, die dem traditionellen Hollywood-Narrativ folgen, reproduzieren oft diese patriarchalischen Ideale und verstärken so die Objektivierung von Frauen. Gleichzeitig haben feministische Filmemacherinnen und Theoretikerinnen begonnen, diese Traditionen zu hinterfragen und alternative Darstellungen von Frauen zu schaffen, die deren Subjektivität und Selbstbestimmung betonen.

Die Untersuchung des Male Gaze im Film bietet wertvolle Einblicke in die historischen und kulturellen Kontexte, die die Repräsentation von Frauen im Kino geprägt haben. Es ermöglicht eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit den sozialen Normen und Geschlechterrollen, die diese Darstellungen beeinflusst haben und weiterhin beeinflussen.

 Research the essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' by Laura Mulvey and describe the work.

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✦ Here you will find information to help you recognize the characteristics of the Male Gaze. Use it for the next task.

Characteristics of Male Gaze in Film Analysis

1. Perspective of the Camera

Examine how the camera frames and follows female characters, often emphasizing their physical appearance and sexual appeal.

Tip: Notice if the camera lingers on body parts or sexualizes the female character's presence.

2. Representation of Female Characters

Identify if women are portrayed in passive roles, primarily existing to support the male protagonist or fulfill his desires.

Tip: Check if female characters lack depth and are defined by their relationships with male characters.

3. Interaction with Male Characters

Observe the dynamics between male and female characters, noting if women are subjected to the male character's gaze or control.

Tip: Look for scenes where men dominate conversations or make decisions for female characters.

4. Sexualization and Fragmentation

Analyze how women's bodies are depicted, often focusing on specific body parts rather than the whole person.

Tip: Watch for scenes that highlight cleavage, legs, or other body parts in a sexualized manner.

5. Narrative Function

Determine if female characters' primary purpose is to advance the male protagonist's story rather than having their own independent arcs.

Tip: Assess if women's roles are limited to love interests, damsels in distress, or objects of male fantasies.

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The Female Gaze in Film

The term "Female Gaze" refers to how women perceive and represent the world, emphasizing women's subjective experiences and agency. Unlike the Male Gaze, which objectifies women for male pleasure, the Female Gaze portrays women as complex beings with their own thoughts, emotions, and desires. It seeks to offer a more authentic and multifaceted depiction of women.

In film, the Female Gaze can manifest through various aspects. First, it involves the perspective of the filmmaker, often a woman, who brings her unique viewpoint to the narrative. This perspective focuses on female characters as active subjects rather than passive objects. Second, the characters within the film reflect this gaze by portraying women with depth and complexity, showcasing their inner lives and struggles. Third, the spectator's experience is shaped by this gaze, encouraging viewers to empathize with the female characters' perspectives rather than merely observing them.

Filmmakers employing the Female Gaze create narratives that prioritize women's experiences and emotions. For instance, camera angles and shots might linger on a woman's expressions and actions, highlighting her agency and subjectivity. The storytelling often avoids sexualizing female characters, instead presenting them in empowered and diverse roles. Films like "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Fleabag" exemplify this approach by offering rich, nuanced portrayals of women's lives and challenges.

By incorporating the Female Gaze, filmmakers challenge traditional patriarchal narratives, providing a platform for women's voices and stories. This shift not only enriches the cinematic landscape but also fosters a deeper understanding of women's experiences, promoting equality and representation in media.

 **Can you think of any other characteristics that would correspond to female gaze instead of male gaze? Write down your ideas.**

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 Create a drawing of the example from the perspective of the female gaze.

 Describe which features of the female gaze are included in your drawing and what effect they are intended to achieve.
