

**The Professional  
Development Programme  
“Conducting an Analytical  
Study of a Filmmaker”**

# Workshop Outline

## What we'll cover this afternoon:

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**01**

Analytical Study of a  
Filmmaker (Film-as-Text)

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**02**

Plot Summary vs  
Analytical Writing

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**03**

Title & Scope for a  
Comparative Study

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**04**

Literary / Dramatic /  
Cinematic Evidence

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**05**

Comparative Thesis,  
Claims & Evidence

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**06**

Structuring, Marking &  
Academic Integrity

# Welcome & Objectives

**Practical teaching strategies for guiding students in a two-film comparative task (film-as-text).**

- Shared approaches/examples are the presenter's own insights/tips.
- Not official guidance; does not represent HKEAA / assessors.
- This workshop will be usable for film-comparison tasks in other units/contexts.

# Welcome & Objectives

## HKDSE Lit in Eng SBA alignment (as applicable):

- At least one film/filmmaker/film genre
- Film(s) chosen for study should have been made originally in English
- 2000–2500 words (or your school's set range)
- Film-as-text focus
- Use *mise-en-scène* / cinematic elements as evidence
- Build an analytical argument (avoid a sociocultural “report”)

## Success Criteria:

- Clear comparative focus (what/why)
- Specific film evidence (shots, sound, editing, performance, lighting, setting)
- Interpretation linked to meaning/effect (not plot summary)
- Manageable scope for the word limit

# Hitchcock & 'Film-as-Text' Analysis

We will be using these two films as examples today.

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## ***Rear Window* (1954)**

Voyeurism, morality, and human behavior.

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## ***Vertigo* (1958)**

Obsession, identity, and psychological depth.

# Role of an Analytical Study

## Purpose

- Argue how films create meaning (beyond simply “what happens”).
- Compare films to reveal patterns, choices, and their effects.
- Focus on evidence (specific moments + film techniques).

## Key text features

- Thesis-driven (clear claim + comparative focus)
- Comparative throughout (similarities/differences tied to purpose)
- Evidence + interpretation (technique → effect → meaning)
- Coherent line of reasoning (each paragraph advances the argument)

# Role of an Analytical Study

## **Tone / style**

- Formal, precise, analytical
- Uses film vocabulary (mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound, performance)
- Avoids plot retelling and vague sociocultural “reporting”

## **Typical organising structures (common options)**

- Thematic (Theme A / Theme B across both films)
- Technique-led (e.g., framing / colour / sound across both films)
- Argument-led (Claim 1 / Claim 2 / Claim 3 with paired evidence)
- Hybrid (theme + technique within each section)

## Warm-Up: Analysis vs Plot Summary

**Plot** = what happens

**Analysis** = how it's constructed + why it matters

Technique → Effect → Meaning

- *Technique*: What film-form choice can you point to? (camera / editing / sound / performance / structure)
- *Effect*: What does it make us do/feel/notice?
- *Meaning*: What idea about characters/themes/power/knowledge does that effect support?

Scenario	Plot / Analysis / Mixed	Technique	Effect	Meaning
In <i>Rear Window</i> , Jeff spies on his neighbours from his apartment and eventually suspects one of them has committed murder.	Plot	Narrative set-up (no specific technique named)	Tells events; little 'how/why'	No interpretive point yet
Across <i>Vertigo</i> and <i>Rear Window</i> , Hitchcock anchors the camera to a single character's point of view so the audience only knows what that character knows.	Analysis	Restricted narration; POV/alignment	Limits info → suspense	Watching = controlled access to knowledge
The confined apartment setting in <i>Rear Window</i> increases tension because Jeff's (and the audience's) view is restricted to what he can see through his window.	Mixed	Single-location mise-en-scène; window-frame composition	Claustrophobia; stakes rise from limited view	Perception shaped by constraint/partial views
In <i>Vertigo</i> , Hitchcock repeatedly uses spiral shapes which mirrors Scottie's growing obsession and makes the tragic ending feel inevitable.	Analysis	Visual motifs; repetition/patterning	Cyclical momentum; fixation	Meaning via recurrence/compulsion, repetition = madness

Important Considerations:

- Could another viewer disagree with the **Meaning**? (If no → it's probably summary)
- Could you prove the **Technique** from a specific moment? (If no → too vague)
- Does the sentence contain a **because / so that / which** link? (If no → missing logic)

# Plot Summary or Analysis?

A statement is **analysis** if it does **2+** of these:

- ✔ Names a *technique* (framing, camera movement, editing, sound, mise-en-scène, motif, colour, lighting)
- ✔ Explains *effect* (builds suspense, restricts knowledge, creates irony, destabilises perspective)
- ✔ Interprets *meaning* (suggests, implies, reinforces a motif, develops an idea about perception/knowledge)
- ✔ Makes a *comparative move* (similarly / whereas / more / less / shifts)
- ✔ Refers to *specific evidence* (a moment, repeated motif, or formal pattern)

# Why Analysis is *Essential*

## Moving Beyond Description Towards Evidence-Based Insights

- Assessments reward interpretation & reasoning  
(analysis > plot summary)
- Shows deep understanding of film as text  
(directorial choices + effects)
- Builds compelling, credible arguments with evidence
- Links scenes to filmmaker's purpose & worldview

# What to Compare in Analysis

## Literary aspects

- Narrative structure, characterisation, conflict, symbolism, themes

## Cinematic / dramatic aspects

- Mise-en-scène (setting, costume, lighting, blocking)
- Cinematography (framing, movement, focus, angle)
- Editing (rhythm, continuity, montage)
- Sound (music, ambience, dialogue, silence)
- Performance (gesture, voice, timing)

## Core comparative sentence frame

- “By using [technique], Film A [effect], suggesting [meaning]; in contrast/similarly, Film B [effect], which [supports/refines/challenges] the argument.”

# Different vs. Same Filmmakers

## Different Filmmakers

- Contrasting artistic responses to similar ideas
- Focuses on dialogue between distinct worldviews
- Often highlights cultural/historical influences on each director (same period/context)
  - Film Noir (Wilder, Hitchcock) = post-war unease & moral ambiguity

# Different vs. Same Filmmakers

## Same filmmaker (Auteur focus) – Recommended

- Tracks one director's artistic voice & style evolution over time
- Traces recurring techniques & signature style progression
  - E.g. Hitchcock voyeurism techniques across decades
    - Hitchcock's use of dolly zoom (*Rebecca* → *Vertigo*) = same method, different impact
    - Hitchcock's voyeuristic shots (*Rear Window* vs. *Psycho*) = different methods, same impact
- Ideal for stylistic & cinematic analysis through progression
  - Can reference cultural influences, but centres on artistic development & signature techniques)

# Constructing Titles

A usable comparative title has three parts:

- Names the **texts**: Hitchcock + *Rear Window* + *Vertigo*
- Names ONE **lens** (film language): framing / POV / editing / sound / mise-en-scène / motif
- **Comparison** pair: X/Y wording (e.g., surveillance/pursuit)

If one part is missing, students drift into theme-only or two mini-reviews

## Common Weak Spots to Look For

- *No Focus*: Too thematic or vague (not technique-based).
- *No Comparison*: Lacks an X/Y pairing to connect ideas.
- *Socio-cultural Drift*: Focuses on society (e.g., “gender roles”) rather than on-screen methods.

## Task 2. Diagnosing Weak Titles

For each weak title, tick the correct box(es) to identify what's wrong. Use these options:

- *No Cinematic/Technical Focus*: Not based on a film technique.
- *No Comparison*: Missing X/Y pairing.
- *Socio-cultural Drift*: Focuses on society or history, not on-screen methods.

### Title 1: 'Themes of isolation in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

No Cinematic/Technical Focus    No Comparison    Socio-cultural Drift

Why? Themes of isolation are vague and lack a clear focus on a film technique

Improved Title: 'Isolation and voyeurism: framing distance in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

### Title 2: 'Gender roles in 1950s American society through *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

No Cinematic/Technical Focus    No Comparison    Socio-cultural Drift

Why? It centres on socio-cultural critique ('gender roles') instead of analysing visual or technical methods.

Improved Title: 'Observation and control: POV in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

### Title 3: 'Suspense techniques in Hitchcock's films.'

No Cinematic/Technical Focus    No Comparison    Socio-cultural Drift

Why? 'Suspense techniques' is too broad and doesn't specify a lens or comparison.

Improved Title: 'Revealing and withholding: editing suspense in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

### Title 4: 'An analytical study of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

No Cinematic/Technical Focus    No Comparison    Socio-cultural Drift

Why? The title is too general and doesn't mention techniques, X/Y contrasts, or a clear focus.

Improved Title: 'Surveillance and pursuit: framing movement in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.'

### Templates for Success:

- [X] and [Y] through [Film Technique] in [Filmmaker]'s [Film 1] and [Film 2]
- Exploring [X and Y] in [Filmmaker]'s [Film 1] and [Film 2]
- From [Aspect in Film 1] to [Aspect in Film 2]: [Film Technique] in [Filmmaker]'s [Film 1] and [Film 2]

# Strong Comparative Claims

## Weak Thesis

- Often focuses on plot summary or themes, not on debatable analysis or technique.

## Strong Claims pass 3 checks:

- Arguable?
  - Is it more than plot summary or obvious theme?
  - Does it offer a debatable point about the film's meaning/effect?
- Supported by Evidence?
  - Can you prove it with scene-specific evidence from BOTH films?
- Cinematic Analysis?
  - Does it focus on film language/mise-en-scène?
  - Does it reference techniques like framing, blocking, or editing?

### Task 3. What counts as evidence?

Tick the best category for each item. If it fits more than one, tick more than one.

	Literary (L)	Dramatic (D)	Cinematic (C)
1. Restricted narration (we know only what one observer knows)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Repeated motif (e.g., spirals/doubling/returns)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Window-frame composition / 'frames within frames'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Telephoto/long-lens distance (watching from far away)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Static viewpoint vs moving pursuit shots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Costume change signalling a shift in identity/role	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Blocking: a character isolated at the edge of the frame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Colour/lighting shift (e.g., green/red wash; high contrast)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Score or sound design increasing tension at key moments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Editing pace (long takes vs rapid cutting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

'Evidence' in film essays isn't just what happens (plot) or what the film is about (message). Evidence is a choice the film makes that you can point to and explain.

So strong analysis follows this chain: Technique / form choice → Effect on the viewer → Meaning / claim

When students get stuck, they can ask:

1. What category is my evidence? (L / D / C)
2. What exactly is the technique? (framing? motif? blocking? editing?)
3. What does it do? (limits knowledge, builds suspense, creates patterns)
4. So what? (what claim does that support?)

# Guiding Your Students

## Step 1: Film Selection

- Choose one filmmaker and two English-language films
  - See Appendix for inspiration

## Step 2: Narrow the Focus

- Identify one recurring theme (e.g., psychological entrapment, isolation)
- Choose one key technique (e.g., mise-en-scène, framing, spiral imagery)
- Ensure the theme and technique connect for meaningful comparison

## Step 3: Develop a Debatable Thesis

- Build a thesis with three clear, connected claims
  - Examples of claims:
    - Confined spaces
    - Spiral imagery
    - Light/shadow contrasts

# Choosing Films/Filmmaker

## 1. Feasibility

- Select two English-language films by the same filmmaker (auteur approach)
- Look for recurring themes, stylistic signatures (e.g. framing, mise-en-scène), or consistent worldview
- Ensure shared themes/techniques for strong comparison

## 2. Accessibility

- Choose films supported by reviews & critical essays
  - Compare published criticism with their own close readings → develop new/original perspectives

## 3. Teaching Value

- Clear stylistic patterns (framing, mise-en-scène)
- Manageable scope – avoid overly complex films
- Engaging themes (identity, morality, isolation)

# Locating Evidence in Film

## Where to look?

- Mise-en-scène: setting, props, costume, colour, lighting, blocking
- Cinematography: framing, shot distance, angle, movement, POV alignment
- Sound/Editing: score, silence, ambient sound, pace, cuts/dissolves

## Choose evidence that will compare well

- Prioritise evidence that is:
  - Specific (shot/still detail you can describe)
  - Repeatable (a pattern across the extract, not a one-off)
  - Comparable (lets you write “Both... however...”)

## Task 4. Testing Claims

Below are three comparative claims about *Vertigo* and *Rear Window*. Pick one and test the claim using the three checks (Arguable → Evidence → Analysis).

1. *Rear Window* follows Jeff watching neighbours from his apartment, while *Vertigo* follows Scottie trailing Madeleine across San Francisco.
2. Across *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock presents looking as risky because it turns curiosity into judgement and possession.
3. Across *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock uses restricted narration and precise framing to ration knowledge, making the viewer complicit in pursuit.

### Claim Test #1: Is it arguable? (not plot / not obvious / not just theme)

YES  NO Why?

1. NO → it's primarily plot summary (what happens), not a debatable interpretive claim.
2. YES → debatable interpretive claim (risk/power/control).
3. YES → clear, debatable claim about spectator alignment/complicity.

### Claim Test #2: Can it be proven with scene-specific evidence from BOTH films?

YES  NO Why?

1. YES (easy to 'prove' with plot moments), but evidence would mostly be narrative summary, not analytical.
2. YES/UNSURE → can be supported, but needs specific scenes selected carefully for both films.
3. YES → readily supported with scene-specific evidence in both films (moments of restricted knowledge + framed watching/pursuit).

### Claim Test #3: Does it invite cinematic analysis (film language / mise-en-scène)?

YES  NO Why?

1. NO → no technique named.
2. NO → doesn't yet require film language; could slip into thematic generalities.
3. YES → explicitly names restricted narration + framing (film language).

Which claim is the best starting point for a comparative film paragraph?  a  b  c

Why? c — it most clearly meets all three checks (arguable, evidence from both films, and film-language analysis). b is arguable but needs specific techniques to stay analytical, and a is mainly plot summary rather than a debatable, film-focused claim.

In your groups, analyse one of the four stills, focusing on a key cinematic technique for each one. Identify a technique from the still, its effect, and how it conveys a broader meaning in the film. Use the Example Evidence Grid to demonstrate how students can connect techniques to themes and claims.

Complete an Evidence Grid for a single claim using this structure: Technique → Effect → Meaning → Link to Claim

Still	Technique	Effect	Meaning	Link to Claim
<i>Figure 1: Voyeurism in the dancer's vitality (Rear Window).</i>	Framing/Blocking – arms-out dynamic pose tightly framed in open window	Creates strong contrast: her energy & movement vs boxed-in space	Highlights Jeff's voyeurism — he watches "free" lives while stuck himself	Rear Window uses framing to contrast isolation with the illusion of freedom
<i>Figure 2: Miss Lonelyhearts' solitary dinner (Rear Window).</i>	Mise-en-scène – empty table set for 2, lots of negative space, lone toast	Draws focus to emptiness & sadness in the room	Shows urban loneliness: surrounded by people but completely isolated	Rear Window explores emotional disconnection through confined mise-en-scène
<i>Figure 3: Judy's transformation into Madeline (Vertigo).</i>	Colour & lighting – green neon glow + red accents on transformed Judy	Gives unnatural, ghostly, artificial feel	Symbolises Scottie turning her into his fantasy version of Madeline	Vertigo reveals how obsession and control distort identity via colour and lighting
<i>Figure 4: The spiral staircase of obsession (Vertigo).</i>	Camera angle – low upward shot of twisting spiral stairs + hand on rail	Creates dizziness, disorientation & downward pull	Mirrors Scottie's mental spiral into obsession & loss of control	Vertigo uses visually trapping and disorienting compositions to convey psychological instability

Use this template to create concise, analytical notes from film stills (i.e., mini-analysis you can build into paragraphs):

- [Subject from the still] demonstrates [cinematic technique]. This creates [effect], which conveys [meaning/theme].

Example Mini-Analyses:

- 'The dancer's dynamic blocking in the window frame demonstrates vitality trapped by composition. This creates a sharp visual contrast with Jeff's immobility, pointing to the film's concern with passive looking versus living.'
- 'Miss Lonelyhearts' carefully arranged solitary dinner demonstrates isolation through negative space and mise-en-scène. This creates a quiet but heavy atmosphere that reveals the painful gap between physical proximity and real connection.'

# Comparative Essays

## Why students lose marks?

- Two mini-essays (Film A then Film B) with no links
- Similarities listed, but no ‘however/whereas’ meaning shift
- Evidence without analysis, or analysis without comparison

## Build comparison at 3 levels

- *Intro*: thesis uses “Across both... however...”
- *Paragraphs*: repeat the habit
  - $E(A) \rightarrow A(A) \rightarrow E(B) \rightarrow A(B) \rightarrow C/T$
- *Whole essay*: each body point develops the same comparative line

## Task 6. Comparison Map

With the person next to you, select one aspect from the comparison map, and come up with a very brief comparative claim (1-2 sentences) based on the shared or contrasting elements highlighted by the keywords or key themes.

Aspect	Film A: <i>Vertigo</i>	Film B: <i>Rear Window</i>	Shared/Contrasting Elements
<b>Theme</b>	Obsession, entrapment, psychological dependency, unreliable perception	Voyeurism, isolation, moral ambiguity, ethical dilemmas	Both films explore psychological isolation and obsessive looking, but <i>Vertigo</i> focuses on internal obsession while <i>Rear Window</i> emphasises external voyeurism.
<b>Mise-en-scène</b>	Spiral imagery (stairs, hair), confined spaces, bold red/green lighting	Window frames as barriers, claustrophobic apartments, voyeuristic framing	Both use confined spaces and framing to create tension, but through spirals ( <i>Vertigo</i> ) versus windows ( <i>Rear Window</i> ).
<b>Cinematography</b>	Tracking shots, dolly zoom ("Vertigo effect"), disorienting movement	Long static shots, limited POV through windows	Both manipulate point-of-view to align the audience with the protagonist's restricted gaze, but <i>Vertigo</i> uses disorienting movement while <i>Rear Window</i> relies on stillness.
<b>Symbolism</b>	Spiral staircase → mental descent, repetition, obsession	Window frames → observer/participant duality, hidden boundaries	Both films use architectural framing symbolically to represent psychological entrapment and the blurred line between watching and acting.
<b>Sound/Score Design</b>	Bernard Herrmann's swirling, obsessive orchestral score	Diegetic urban sounds (voices, music, traffic)	Both heighten tension through sound design, but <i>Vertigo</i> uses emotional non-diegetic music while <i>Rear Window</i> relies on realistic diegetic sounds.
<b>Message/Purpose</b>	The destructive power of obsession and the unreliability of perception	The ethics of voyeurism and the morality of intervention	Both examine the moral and psychological cost of watching others, but <i>Vertigo</i> focuses on self-destruction through obsession while <i>Rear Window</i> questions the ethics of passive observation.

# Shaping the Paragraph

1 body paragraph = repeatable comparative pattern

- TS (comparative topic sentence)
- E(A) → A(A) (Film A evidence, then what it does/means)
- E(B) → A(B) (Film B evidence, then what it does/means)
- C/T (comparison/transition pivot: Both... however/whereas...)
- S (mini-synthesis: what this reveals about the filmmaker's method/idea)

## **Non-negotiables (quick reminder)**

- Each paragraph uses Film A + Film B (not A-only then B-only)
- Analysis names technique + viewer effect + meaning
- Comparison is explicit (however / whereas / while / similarly)
- (no “silent comparison”)

## Task 7. Building Paragraphs

In groups, label each sentence below according to its function in a paragraph structure. Then sequence the sentences into the most logical paragraph order.

**TS** = Topic Sentence (overall claim)

**A(B)** = Analysis of Film B

**E(A)** = Evidence from Film A

**C/T** = Comparison / Transition

**A(A)** = Analysis of Film A

**S** = Mini-Synthesis (concluding sentence)

**E(B)** = Evidence from Film B

- a) In both *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock restricts and directs the audience's gaze to transform passive looking into an active, morally charged act.  
Answer: **TS** Why? **Shared comparative claim. Look for: arguable + comparative (both / however)**
- b) This controlled looking turns the viewer into a voyeur who experiences fixation rather than mere observation, as the camera repeatedly returns to the same figure or space.  
Answer: **A(b)** Why? **Effect + emerging meaning. Upgrade: sharpen technique (repeated return shots / score cueing / editing pattern)**
- c) In *Rear Window*, the protagonist watches his neighbours through a window, transforming the courtyard into a series of framed 'screens'.  
Answer: **E(a)** Why? **Specific, observable moment. Upgrade: name technique (framing-within-framing / restricted POV)**
- d) Overall, Hitchcock's signature method of restricting and directing perception makes the viewer complicit in the act of watching.  
Answer: **S** Why? **Mini synthesis (filmmaker method). Upgrade: tie back to overall claim keywords (complicity / ethics / control)**
- e) Because the audience receives information only through the protagonist's limited perspective, suspense is generated by partial knowledge and the anxiety of not seeing everything.  
Answer: **A(a)** Why? **Mechanism (how suspense works). Upgrade: add method (withholding / reaction cuts / restricted viewpoint)**
- f) In *Vertigo*, the protagonist's gaze evolves into obsessive pursuit as he follows a woman through public spaces.  
Answer: **E(b)** Why? **Parallel evidence for Film B. Upgrade: name technique (tracking shots / following movement / repetition)**
- g) While *Rear Window* presents looking as distant surveillance, *Vertigo* intensifies it into dangerous obsessive tracking—the same act of looking shifts dramatically in moral weight.  
Answer: **C/T** Why? **C/T = explicit comparison + pivot. Look for: while/whereas + clear contrast**

Logical order: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ → 2. \_\_\_\_\_ → 3. \_\_\_\_\_ → 4. \_\_\_\_\_ → 5. \_\_\_\_\_ → 6. \_\_\_\_\_ → 7. \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested order = a (TS) → c (E(A)) → e (A(A)) → f (E(B)) → b (A(B)) → g (C/T) → d (S)

Note: Sentences c and g (or d and g) can sometimes swap depending on how students build their logic.

# Structuring Comparisons

## A Clear 6-Part Structure (~2000 words)

- Introduction (~200 words)
- Body Paragraph 1 (~300–330 words)
- Body Paragraph 2 (~300–330 words)
- Body Paragraph 3 (~300–330 words)
- Body Paragraph 4 (~300–330 words)
- Synthesis & Conclusion (~200 words)

## References

- Aim for 10–15 high-quality academic sources.
- Integrate them throughout — use them or lose marks!

# Suggested Structure

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## **Introduction**

### **Hook, Context & Thesis**

Hook + brief context for both filmmakers.

Clear comparative thesis that signposts the main areas of analysis.

# Suggested Structure

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## Introduction

### Hook, Context & Thesis

Hitchcock: *Rear Window* (1954) & *Vertigo* (1958). Voyeurism, male gaze, obsession

Thesis: Both expose male gaze; *RW* contains with it while *V* destroys.

# Suggested Structure

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## Introduction

### Hook, Context & Thesis

Hook + brief context for both filmmakers.  
Clear comparative thesis that signposts the main areas of analysis.

---

## Body Paragraph 1

### Claim 1 (Shared Pattern)

State a key similarity or technique used across both texts. Explain its overall effect or meaning.

# Suggested Structure

---

## Introduction

### Hook, Context & Thesis

Hook + brief context for both filmmakers.  
Clear comparative thesis that signposts the main areas of analysis.

---

## Body Paragraph 1

### Claim 1 (Shared Pattern)

Central voyeuristic male gaze. Jeffries/  
Scottie as surrogate viewers. POV shots +  
women as objects (Lisa/Madeleine).  
Audience complicity.

# Suggested Structure

---

## Introduction

### Hook, Context & Thesis

Hook + brief context for both filmmakers.  
Clear comparative thesis that signposts the main areas of analysis.

---

## Body Paragraph 1

### Claim 1 (Shared Pattern)

State a key similarity or technique used across both texts. Explain its overall effect or meaning.

---

## Body Paragraph 2

### Development / Variation of Claim 1

Explore how the shared pattern differs between the two texts. Analyse the variation and its changing effect.

# Suggested Structure

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## Introduction

### Hook, Context & Thesis

Hook + brief context for both filmmakers.  
Clear comparative thesis that signposts the main areas of analysis.

---

## Body Paragraph 1

### Claim 1 (Shared Pattern)

State a key similarity or technique used across both texts. Explain its overall effect or meaning.

---

## Body Paragraph 2

### Development / Variation of Claim 1

*RW*: external/contained (courtyard)  
*V*: internal/obsessive (following & remaking). Curiosity → possession → tragedy. Order restored vs collapse.

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)

Introduce a second significant point of comparison or technique. Show how it appears across both texts.

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)

Colour & visual style. *RW*: cool tones + static shots = control. *V*: reds, spirals, dolly zoom = instability. *Mise-en-scène* mirrors psyche.

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### **Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)**

Introduce a second significant point of comparison or technique. Show how it appears across both texts.

---

## Body Paragraph 4

### **Development / Variation of Claim 2**

Examine how the second technique or idea differs between the texts. Analyse the contrasting effects or implications.

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)

Introduce a second significant point of comparison or technique. Show how it appears across both texts.

---

## Body Paragraph 4

### Development / Variation of Claim 2

*RW*: gaze = power. *V*: gaze = loss of control & identity. Female remake (Lisa dresses up vs Judy transformed). Falling motif + lighting.

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### **Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)**

Introduce a second significant point of comparison or technique. Show how it appears across both texts.

---

## Body Paragraph 4

### **Development / Variation of Claim 2**

Examine how the second technique or idea differs between the texts. Analyse the contrasting effects or implications.

---

## Conclusion

### **Synthesise Main Claims**

Bring the two claims together. Explain what the patterns and variations reveal about the director / texts / broader idea. Restate the thesis!

# Suggested Structure

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## Body Paragraph 3

### Claim 2 (New Technique / Idea)

Introduce a second significant point of comparison or technique. Show how it appears across both texts.

---

## Body Paragraph 4

### Development / Variation of Claim 2

Examine how the second technique or idea differs between the texts. Analyse the contrasting effects or implications.

---

## Conclusion

### Synthesise Main Claims

Shared techniques trace Hitchcock's evolving critique of the gaze. Voyeurism shifts: entertainment → destruction. Restated: Looking contains in *RW*, but destroys in *V*.

# Key Assessment Criteria

## Assess the “Big 4”

- *Claim* = clear, debatable how/why (not a descriptive theme statement)
- *Evidence* = specific, cinematic, observable moments (not plot summary / vague comment)
- *Film language* = uses mise-en-scène + other techniques to support the argument
- (e.g. framing, blocking, editing, sound, colour/light)
- *Comparison (if 2 films)* = integrated Both... however/whereas... (not Film A then Film B)

Technique + evidence are always tied back to the claim.

## Sample 1

Hitchcock's work often explores the theme of looking in unique and compelling ways. In *Rear Window*, the opening credits dissolve over an image of blinds lifting, framing the courtyard beyond Jefferies's window. This *mise-en-scène* aligns the audience with Jefferies's subjective point of view, positioning us as voyeurs confined to his limited visual space—the window frame serving as an allegory for this confinement of perspective—similarly passive spectators rather than active participants in the unfolding narrative. By contrast, the opening credits of *Vertigo* employ an extreme close-up of a woman's eye, dissolving into spirals that engulf the screen, using graphic imagery to draw the audience into a disorienting visual world, where appearances are deceptive, and foreshadowing the film's central motif. These contrasting openings establish the auteur's distinct perspectives on perception, subjectivity, and the implications of spectatorship.

# What “quality” looks like

## ✓ Done well

- Clear claim, spectatorship explored through visual techniques
- Specific evidence, blinds show confinement, spirals suggest deception
- Film language tied to meaning, blinds: voyeurs, spirals: disorientation
- Integrated comparison, links both films without isolating

## ✗ Still to improve

- Deepen claims, expand beyond spectatorship in conclusion
- Technique terms need more precision, e.g., framing, effects
- Moments like blinds or spirals need more refinement/detail
- Add screenshots to support and strengthen analysis

## Sample 2

Hitchcock's exploration of injury links to themes of agency and spectatorship. In *Rear Window*, Jefferies's broken leg confines him to a stationary viewpoint, with the window frame symbolising his restricted perspective and voyeuristic role. In contrast, *Vertigo* opens by showing Scottie's injury, where his acrophobia traps him in fear, stripping him of agency during the rooftop chase. Jefferies's physical wound drives his voyeurism, while Scottie's psychological trauma reveals his loss of control over perception itself. While both injuries reflect Hitchcock's interest in powerlessness, the films differ in how they visually express this theme, with *Rear Window* focusing on physical stillness and *Vertigo* emphasising psychological chaos.

# What “quality” looks like

## ✓ Done well

- Comparative frame connects injury to agency and spectatorship
- Strong claim with contrast, both injuries reflect loss of control
- Evidence links visuals to meaning (e.g., window frame, rooftop scene)
- Comparison balances Rear Window’s stillness with Vertigo’s chaos

## ✗ Still to improve

- Conclusion could expand broader implications of powerlessness
- Film language could be sharper (e.g., camera framing, angles)
- Evidence lacks specificity in certain moments (e.g., rooftop, apartment)

## Sample 3

Hitchcock explores obsession and love in both *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, showing how relationships can develop in dramatic and unexpected ways. In *Rear Window*, Jefferies is stuck in his apartment because of his injury, so he begins observing his neighbors. This obsession with watching their lives eventually causes him to get involved in their drama, particularly with the suspected murder, which makes the movie exciting. In *Vertigo*, Scottie becomes obsessed with a woman he is hired to follow and later falls in love with her—or at least who he thinks she is. His obsession grows when she dies, and this reveals more about how unhealthy his idea of love is. Both of these films deal with characters who watch others and love them from a distance, which shows that Hitchcock is encouraging the audience to question how we see relationships in our own lives.

# What “quality” looks like

## ✓ Done well

- Includes both films (basic coverage)
  - Includes ideas of obsession and relationships in both films
  - Mention of key characters (Jefferies, Scottie) connects to theme
  - Gestures toward a broad takeaway for the audience

## ✗ Still to improve

- Claim is shallow, does not explain how themes are explored
- Evidence overly plot-based, lacks specifics or analysis
- Film language absent, no mention of visuals or techniques
- Comparison linear, “A then B” with no meaningful connection

## Task 8. Assessing Student Work

Read both student excerpts ([Sample A](#) and [Sample B](#)). These show two different ways of approaching a comparative analysis of two films by the same filmmaker (Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*). Notice how the two samples succeed in different ways.

For each sample:

- Use the dedicated checklist (Checklist for Sample A / Checklist for Sample B).
- Tick Yes / Partly / No for each section.
- Quote one short phrase as evidence.

At the bottom, write one sentence about the overall strength of this analytical approach.

### Sample A

Across both *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock employs restricted point-of-view framing and precise editing to position the audience as complicit voyeurs, yet these techniques generate contrasting psychological responses. In *Rear Window*, during the tense sequence when Lisa climbs the fire escape into Thorwald's apartment, Hitchcock uses rapid shot/reverse-shot editing between close-ups of Jeff's panicked face—visualising the emotional toll of his helplessness—and long shots of the courtyard below, where Lisa is ultimately attacked by Thorwald. This interplay frames voyeurism as both the observation of unfolding events and the emotional spectacle of Jeff's panic, evoking a mirrored emotional response in the audience. By contrast, *Vertigo* employs the famous “dolly zoom” to visually mirror and amplify Scottie's psychological disorientation. This technique, which simultaneously moves the camera forward while zooming out (or vice versa), creates a vertiginous effect that mimics Scottie's psychological breakdown. As the distorted perspective warps the viewer's sense of space, it pulls the audience directly into Scottie's unsteady gaze, blurring the line between perception and reality. Both *Rear Window* and *Vertigo* use camera techniques to translate the protagonist's emotions to the audience—one through static observation, the other through dynamic distortion of reality.

### Sample B

In both *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock explores the thrilling yet morally corrosive nature of looking, but the viewer's emotional entanglement differs profoundly between the films. *Rear Window* preserves a sense of detached curiosity: when Lisa ventures across the courtyard and into Thorwald's darkened apartment via the fire escape, the audience shares Jeff's rising panic and relief from the safety of his window, experiencing the danger as a thrilling game rather than a personal moral failing. The careful framing maintains emotional distance, allowing for the intellectual enjoyment of suspense. In *Vertigo*, however, that same moral discomfort becomes deeply unsettling. As Scottie follows Madeleine from the flower shop to the art gallery and later dives into the San Francisco Bay to rescue her, the film's slow pacing, tight subjective framing, and dreamlike soft-focus shots gradually erode any emotional distance. The audience is drawn inexorably into Scottie's growing obsession, feeling the weight of complicity as his gaze shifts from professional duty to unhealthy fixation. Ultimately, *Rear Window* lets viewers enjoy the voyeuristic act with a degree of playful detachment, whereas *Vertigo* forces us to confront its disturbing psychological and moral cost, leaving the spectator far more entangled and uneasy.

**Checklist for Sample A**

A. Claim (debatable how/why)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Evidence (specific + cinematic)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Film language (technique named)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Technique → effect → meaning (the “so what?”)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

E. Comparison (integrated)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall strength of Sample A’s analytical approach:

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**Checklist for Sample B**

A. Claim (debatable how/why)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Evidence (specific + cinematic)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Film language (technique named)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Technique → effect → meaning (the “so what?”)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

E. Comparison (integrated)  Yes  Partly  No Evidence Quote: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall strength of Sample B’s analytical approach:

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Work with a partner (or in a small group). Compare your completed checklists.

1. Where did we agree or disagree on the ticks? What different evidence did we notice?
2. What does *Sample A* do particularly well that *Sample B* does less strongly (or vice versa)? Consider aspects like technical/cinematic focus vs. psychological/emotional impact on the viewer.
3. If you were giving feedback to these students, what one strength and one suggestion would you offer for each sample?

Next, as a group, we will share observations and co-create a simple shared analytic framework.

1. What different strengths did the two samples demonstrate?
2. Which “look-fors” from the checklists appeared most strongly (or needed strengthening) in each sample?
3. What 4–5 key criteria should we teach our students to aim for when writing a comparative analysis of two films by the same director?

# Using AI Responsibly

## AI as a Tool:

- Brainstorming ideas = overcoming mental blocks!
- Simplify and clarify complex concepts
- Generating bibliographies
- Supporting the research process (e.g., Consensus, Elicit, ThesisAI).
- Language refinement (proof, structure, and tone)

## Balancing Creativity and Ethics:

- AI should supplement creativity—not replace it.
- Avoid over-reliance on AI to maintain diverse perspectives.
- Teachers should ensure students develop critical skills—like interpreting and generating ideas—without solely relying on AI tools.

# Using AI Responsibly

## Practical Safeguards

- Require evidence of process:
  - Drafts, outlines, and version history.
  - Title/thesis proposals or annotated bibliographies.
- Use in-class writing or timed tasks to verify originality.
- Request notes from discussions or brainstorming sessions.
- Utilise originality-checking tools (e.g., Turnitin, Grammarly).
- Include AI declaration forms with reflections on its usage.

## Encourage Ethical AI Use:

- Teach proper citation of AI assistance.
- Emphasise the value of independent analysis and critical thinking.

## Useful Links

### General Resources

- [Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority \(SBA Booklet\)](#)
- [Glossary of Film Terms](#)
- [Hong Kong Film Classification](#)

### Comprehensive Film Databases

- [IMDb \(Internet Movie Database\)](#)
- [Rotten Tomatoes](#)
- [Movie Review Query Engine \(MRQE\)](#)
- [BBC Film](#)

### Film Research & Analysis

- [Purdue University's Film Studies Guide](#)
- [British Film Institute \(BFI\)](#)
- [Senses of Cinema](#)
- [Greatest Films – Filmsite](#)
- [Sight & Sound](#)
- [Criterion Collection](#)

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**Thank you!**