



Background Materials for Trailer Analysis

Initial Impressions

Titles

The title of a film is what first catches our attention and arouses our interest in a film. As such, the choice of a title is a crucial part of the marketing campaign and can make a big difference as to whether or not the film is successful at the box office. The title of a film, along with other aspects of the marketing campaign may be altered to fit the particular cultural requirements of the territory in which the film is released.

- What does a title need to do/be if it is to attract an audience for the film? What should it NOT do/be?
- Think of ten titles that you consider helped to sell the film to an audience. Why were they so effective?

The film King Arthur is based on a legend, and so the film has retained the name used in legend. What does this title suggest to you? Why did the filmmakers decide to call the film King Arthur rather than simply Arthur (as Arthur is not actually a king in the film)?

Genre as classification

Genre is a means of classifying that enables us to group together films according to narrative and film style. However, within each genre we can classify further into sub-genres. For example, a film may fall mainly into the classification of science fiction but may feature a relationship that means a love story is a strong factor in the narrative.

From your first viewing of the King Arthur trailer, what type of film would you say it is?

Narratives

When we watch a trailer we know from experience that we are seeing the most exciting, funny, significant or dramatic parts of a film and that we must interact with these to create a whole story from the parts we are given. A trailer is designed to create a 'want-to-see' reaction in an audience. To this end the trailer will give the audience some amount of information about a film in terms of narrative and character but equally will aim to raise questions that can only be answered by seeing the whole film.

- Having watched the trailer for King Arthur list five events that we see and alongside these, the questions that each event raises.





The Story

A trailer should very quickly give an image of the story of the film it is promoting. From your analysis of the trailer, can you say what the possible story of King Arthur might be?

A Mini Story

You may already have an understanding of how stories/narratives work but we will briefly recap:

- Initially at the start of the story there is a situation, an 'equilibrium' which exists.
- This 'equilibrium' is then disrupted by a conflict between the hero (or heroine) and an opposing force.
- The hero goes through a number of trials in order to try to resolve the conflict.
- The conflict is resolved and a new 'equilibrium' is introduced.

This is the normal outline of any story and it depends on the genre of the story as to how the different elements are presented. Thus a love story will present the conflict in a different way to a science fiction story. The sorts of resolution of a story will also differ depending on the genre of the film.

If we are only looking at a trailer, then how can this model help us to understand what is going on?

Firstly, we need to think about what is happening in the trailer. Basically, the hero is under threat and needs either to escape or else destroy the person/thing that is chasing him/her. Once that threat has been removed then the conflict is over and calm is restored. Look back at our description of a story and see how this fits in with the outlined structure.

However, because the trailer only gives us key moments from the film how does it give us information that allows us to get an idea of what will happen in the film itself?

Look back at your analysis of the trailer and then try to suggest which shots link in with which part of the story structure.

When you have seen the film you will be able to see how correct your predictions were.

THE SET UP

THE THREAT

THE CONFLICT

RESOLUTIONS





The Trailer

The trailer for a film must encourage us to want to see the film. A poster has a hard task – it must catch our attention and give us information about a film in one still image. It is much easier for a trailer to give us a real taste of what the film is like because it uses moving image, like the film itself. Moving images, whatever they are, have a far better chance of catching our attention than something that is still. The trailer holds our attention because the images change really quickly and we must concentrate all the time or we may miss something. Added to this, a trailer uses sound to get its message across. Music, sound effects, speech from the film and the voice-over all join together to create an exciting mixture for our ears. The combination of sound and moving images is a very effective way of attracting us to see a film. We usually see a trailer just before we are about to see a film, although sometimes a short version of them appears in the advert breaks on television. Whether in the cinema or on television, the distributors think carefully about who will be watching at this time and try to show a trailer which will be interesting to this type of audience.

Trailer Task

View the trailer for King Arthur again. Have a piece of paper and a pen to hand.

- At what point in the trailer are we told the name of the film? Why is this?
- Why are we told who is starring in the film? How is this information given to us?
- What type of action from the film do we see?
- What clues do the music give us as to what type of film the trailer is advertising?
- What can you say about the voice of the person delivering the voice-over? Why do you think this voice was chosen? What effect does it have?
- How does the speed of what we see compare to watching a clip from a film? Why is this? Does the speed alter through the trailer or stay the same?
- What information are we given in the very last frame of the trailer?
- Which is more effective in making you want to see the film, the poster or the trailer? Why is this?

How is the title used as a selling point both in terms of the actual title itself and its position within the trailer?

What elements of the trailer enable you to immediately recognise the genre of the film? Why is it important from the distributor's point of view that the trailer highlights the genre of the film?

At the beginning of each trailer we are used to seeing the logo for the company that is distributing the film. Can you remember the distributor's name for King Arthur? And what is their logo?

The director and/or producer of a film may also play an important role in attracting an audience to see a film. Comment on the way in which the director has been marketed in this trailer. Find out what other films the director has made. How does the director's previous films raise expectations for King Arthur?

Trailers often incorporate a voice-over and this is important in setting the tone for the film. Listen to the voice-over for the trailer for King Arthur. What information is given by the voice-over? How many voices do we hear?

