

Auteurism Worksheet

What is an *auteur*? Literally, it is French for “author,” and in Film Studies refers to one or more of the following:

- The principal creator of a film;
- The principal source of meaning in a film;
- A filmmaker who demonstrates technical excellence;
- A filmmaker who makes films of artistic merit as opposed to those of commercial value;
- A filmmaker who makes films with an individual style;
- A filmmaker who makes films with similar themes;
- A filmmaker who adopts a “jack of all trades” approach to filmmaking;
- A group of filmmakers who make a “great” film.

Auteur:

Joseph L. Mankiewicz

Focus films: *If I Had A Million, Three Comrades, The Late George Apley, House of Strangers, A Letter to Three Wives, No Way Out, All About Eve, People Will Talk, Five Fingers, The Quiet American, The Barefoot Contessa, The Honey Pot*

Problematic: What *thematic* and *stylistic* attributes are consistently (and coherently) evidenced or manifested in these films written and /or directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz—which would justify a characterization of him as an *auteur*?

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
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Directions: Use this format. Typewritten (not handwritten) on this worksheet or on the same format created on your own. Due: 11 Dec 13.]

[Secondary research will include reviews, articles, interviews, biographies, film histories and criticism, but also publicity material, box office statistics, and fan websites. The main sources of secondary research will be the library and the internet (www.imdb.com) & the British Film Institute website (www.bfi.org.uk) for access to the *Sight and Sound* archives.]

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
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[Note that *five* points need to be discussed to complete the Mankiewicz worksheet—even though only three are included in the Tarantino illustration.]

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
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Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
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[A minimum of five points should be discussed.]

Example

**Auteurism Worksheet
Quentin Tarantino**

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
<p>Nonlinear storytelling is a strong attribute of Tarantino's films. The nonlinear storytelling doesn't make Tarantino's films confusing; on the contrary, every chapter is tied together. This narratological approach brings to the audience a different experience and perspective in making the stories comprehensible.</p>	<p>1.) "TITLE CARD 'MR. BLONDE' INT. JOE CABOT'S OFFICEDAY ... FLASH ON WAREHOUSE The three men are stomping the cop into the ground ... BACK TO EDDIE ..." (<i>Reservoir Dogs</i>)</p> <p>2.) "CUT TO: CREDIT SEQUENCE: 'PULP FICTION' ... FADE TO BALCK TITLE CARD: 'THE GOLD WATCH'" (<i>Pulp Fiction</i>)</p>	<p>1.) "The film uses a non-linear storyline by showing how the characters got to the present situation and how the heist got messed up. The film begins with the characters having a conversation at a diner. It then skips to one of the thieves bleeding and screaming in the back seat of the car. From here the film goes back and forth from the past to the future. This technique works very well in this film because of its radical beginning. This keeps the audience's attention, and unravels the story in a creative yet simple way. ("The Use of Non-linear Plotting in <i>Reservoir Dogs</i> and <i>Pulp Fiction</i>," written by Ruth Enamorado, voices.yahoo.com)</p> <p>2.) "<i>Pulp Fiction</i> is one of the most successful movies containing a non-linear narrative. Its controversial ways made it famous, and Quentin Tarantino's film became a big influence in the growth of non-linear movies. The controversial way of plotting the story challenges them to make cause-and-effect connections between the scenes." ("<i>Pulp Fiction</i> and Non-linear Narrative," Media Course)</p>

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
<p>In his films, Tarantino uses extended passages of dialogue—from which the audience will gain much narrative exposition and many character insights.</p>	<p>1.) "Now that there is the Tec-9, a crappy spray gun from South Miami. This gun is advertised as the most popular gun in American crime. Do you believe that shit? It actually says that in the little book that comes with it: the most popular gun in American crime. Like they're actually proud of that shit." —Samuel L. Jackson as Ordell Robbie (<i>Jackie Brown</i>)</p> <p>2.) "I'm very sorry the government taxes their tips, that's fucked up. That ain't my fault. It would seem to me that waitresses are one of the many groups the government fucks in the ass on a regular basis. Look, if you ask me to sign something that says the government shouldn't do that, I'll sign it, put it to a vote, I'll vote for it, but what I won't do is play ball. And as for this non-college bullshit, I got two words for that: learn to fuckin' type, 'cause if you're expecting me to help out with the rent you're in for a big fuckin' surprise." —Steve Buscemi as Mr. Pink (<i>Reservoir Dogs</i>)</p>	<p>1.) "Tarantino devotes virtually the entire movie to dialogue; we learn a lot about these people and what brought them to this point. It's not surprising to note that the film boasts an emphasis on dialogue that pervades its every aspect." ("Quentin Tarantino: The '90s and '00s," written by David Nusair, Reelfilm.com)</p> <p>2.) "Tarantino's talk is not just the fuel of his movies: it's the engine, the wheels and most of the frame. It's where the real dramatic and philosophical action takes place. The gunshots, car crashes and torture scenes are punctuation." ("Quentin Tarantino in His Own Words," written by Matt Zoller and Keith Uhlich, Themagazine.com)</p>

Point	Example from focus film	Example from research
<p>The female characters in Tarantino's films are always strong, independent, brave, and often vengeful.</p> <p>[A minimum of five points should be discussed to complete the Mankiewicz worksheet.]</p>	<p>2.) "My name is Shosanna Dreyfus and THIS is the face of Jewish vengeance!" —Melanie Laurent as Shosanna Dreyfus (<i>Inglourious Basterds</i>)</p>	<p>"If I asked you to name a Hollywood filmmaker who creates strong women characters, I'm betting you wouldn't instantly cry out, 'Quentin Tarantino.' But Tarantino's heroines are fantasies because his psyche is saturated with movie mythology. Tarantino is a rarity: he loves women in his movies." (John Powers, "Pulp Goddesses: Tarantino and His Women," Vogue.com)</p>

