



Activity Guide: How do I do a Film Forum?

The following steps are suggested; the activity is flexible enough to allow for numerous variations in structure and method, however, depending on the needs and desires of your particular group.

1) Choose a film from the COMPASS Web Page to see which guides are available

2) Preview the film and the film guide

- If the descriptions on the web page don't give you enough information about the film, previewing is the best way to determine how to promote the Film Forum on your campus.
- In any case, whoever will be hosting/directing the forum should preview the film and the film guide so as to be ready to direct the forum.

3) Choose a venue

- The location should be easy to get to and conducive both to viewing the film and discussing it in a group setting. Don't forget to have the necessary apparatus for showing the film!
- Ideally, your location will have one room for the viewing and formal discussion, and one room for the snack and informal discussion.
- Choose a time convenient for students.

4) Promote the Film Forum

- Be creative and proactive in promoting it, inviting by word of mouth, by advertising, by fliers and posters, by letters to the editor on the issue the film addresses, by COMPASS members inviting their dorm companions, etc...
- This enjoyable and stimulating activity can be an especially effective tool to bring non-practicing or non-believing peers back into the fold.

5) Session Outline

- Be sure that you and the other COMPASS members greet and welcome whoever comes, making them feel comfortable. Throughout the film forum, be sure to make an effort to get to know new faces and have one-on-one contact with everyone. Exchange emails and phone numbers so that you can invite them to other events and get them more involved, little by little (don't be obnoxious or disrespectful), in their faith and in other COMPASS activities that might help them.
- When everyone has arrived the host introduces the goals and structure of Film Forums and then introduces the film itself, summing up the plot and the primary themes and questions that will be discussed afterwards. (10 minutes) Then the film is viewed.
- A refreshment break is held after the film has been viewed (for really long films it is sometimes a good idea to break for an intermission as well). This is a good time for informal discussion of the film. (15-30 minutes)
- Come back together for discussion and debate. The host, using the prefabricated questionnaire, leads a discussion on the film, including some of the following areas: major conflicts; side taken by film; how the media is used to convince viewer; Church teaching on that issue; artistic quality; practical application to our daily lives. The host can either distribute copies of the entire questionnaire or of selected questions or supplementary quotations, or not distribute anything and use the questionnaire only to prepare personally for the discussion ahead of time. The important thing is not to answer all the questions "correctly", but to use the discussion to personalize the valuable issues and aspects presented by these films. (30-40 minutes), Some sure-fire questions to stimulate discussion for any film are:
 - o What is the main conflict of this film and how was it resolved?
 - o What do you think was the most critical scene of the film and why?
 - o What was your favorite scene?
 - o What is this film's message? Is it a good one?
 - o What elements of the film besides the plot (e.g. music, scenery, camera work) contributed most to communicating the message?
- Depending on the number of participants, you may want to break up into small groups of three to five people. Each small group selects a representative to speak on their behalf in response to the questions posed by the questionnaire at the end of the small group discussion.
- The host then wraps things up, thanking the participants and inviting them to the next Film Forum.

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A Note on Viewing Films Intelligently

At heart, Film is a species of drama, which in turn is a literary art form. Fully appreciating any drama requires identifying the fundamental *conflicts* that propel the action forward. Who are the protagonists, what are they seeking and why, and what is obstructing their efforts to attain it?

The *quality* of a drama depends on two factors: 1) how deeply the conflict - with its development and resolution – reflects and sheds light on the fundamental truths of our human experience, and 2) how effectively and beautifully the dramatic elements – the acting, the cinematography, the music, the arrangement of individual scenes, costumes, etc. – portray the conflict. These aspects of presentation ought to draw the viewer deeper and deeper into the central conflict; otherwise a film may be a gripping or pretty spectacle, but will not stir the soul.

An intelligent film viewer, then, identifies the primary and secondary conflicts, follows attentively their development and resolution, and analyzes and evaluates the other aspects of the film in terms of how they draw the viewer more deeply into the conflict's development and resolution. Intelligent viewing thereby enhances one's enjoyment of the film, by allowing you to experience it on many different levels at the same time.

“Every piece of art, be it religious or secular, be it a painting, a sculpture, a poem or any form of handicraft made by loving skill, is a sign, a symbol, of the inscrutable secret of human existence, of man's origin and destiny, of the meaning of his life and work. It speaks to us of the meaning of birth and death, of the greatness of man.”

Pope John Paul II,
Speech delivered at Clonmacnois Monastery, Ireland
September 30, 1979

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