CHAPTER 2 ASSIGNMENT

By: Nick Laughlin

**PART 1 (Due Thursday, November 5th) – Paper that addresses the questions below, about my story –**

1. **What is the *THEME* of my story?**
2. **What is the story’s *PRIMARY CONFLICT*?**
3. **Who/What is the *ANTAGONIST* in the story?**
4. **What are the *KEY PLOT POINTS* of this story? (The key turning points; points of no return)**

**PART 2 (Due Thursday, November 12th) – Watch assigned twelve movies; Write a one page paper response to each movie, answering each of the following questions in each response –**

1. **Who is the *PROTAGONIST* in each film?**
2. **What is the *CONFLICT* that drives the narrative?**
3. **What is the *TONE* of each film? (Genre/Feel)**
4. **What is the *THEME* of each film?**
5. **Are the characters in each film relatable? Why or why not?**
6. **What can I take away from each story that may benefit me as I write my story?**

**12 MOVIES TO WATCH FOR PART 2:**

1. **The Rainmaker (1997) – Francis Ford Coppola**
2. **Shooter (2007) – Antoine Fuqua**
3. **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2009) – Niels Arden Oplev**
4. **Wall Street (1987) – Oliver Stone**
5. **The Firm (1993) – Sydney Pollack**
6. **The Ides of March (2011) – George Clooney**
7. **Gone Girl (2014) – David Fincher**
8. **Michael Clayton (2007) – Tony Gilroy**
9. **Bubble (2005) – Steven Soderbergh**
10. **The Constant Gardener (2005) – Fernando Meirelles**
11. **Eyes Wide Shut (1999) – Stanley Kubrick**
12. **The Drop (2014) – Michael R. Roskam**

**PART 1 – MY STORY**

1. **What is the *THEME* of the story?**

Technically, the main theme of the story is: ***Man vs. Society.*** The story is meant to explore the concept of trust. Centering on three characters, each one has a secret truth buried away from their social surface. These truths could be a moment from their past, a skill that they’ve mastered as they’ve grown, or a mental deformity affecting their present situational judgement. These truths also lead to the primary conflict, after some of them are exposed.

1. **What is the story’s *PRIMARY CONFLICT*?**

The primary conflict of the story is that a screenwriter, Martin Lake, is accused of eight counts of drug-induced rape by all eight of the female victims. Over the course of a week, Martin attempts to keep this outrageous story from the press, while trying to maintain a relationship with a local girl that he likes.

1. **Who/What is the *ANTAGONIST* of the story?**

The antagonist of the story is Martin’s former boss, who is the grand architect of Martin’s pain throughout the story. But this should be unclear. The audience shouldn’t be able to tell who the actual antagonist is until the very end. The audience should question whether Martin really, truly did what he’s accused of, until a key piece of evidence is shown to prove the story’s true nature.

1. **What are the *KEY PLOT POINTS* of the story?**
* Introduction to main characters – **Martin Lake**, an ambitious young screenwriter that has come across a family fortune and ownership of his late uncles bar & restaurant through his uncles will – **Gavin Bay**, Martins former boss with ‘Victorian Marketing’ – Martin and Gavin meet when Gavin visits Martins bar, and arrange to meet at Martins new condo later in the week to discuss issues
* Introduction to female lead – **Bella Faith**, Martins assistant and close friend – Introduced when Martin is given a tour of his new condo that he rented in Los Angeles
* Conflict is established when Martin starts receiving bank statements from Victorian Marketing with attached documents of Martins medical/court reports. Martin attempts to call Victorian Marketing to question said documents, only to find that their phone numbers are no longer in service.
* Martin and Gavin have an informal meeting at Martins condo, with Bella present. Gavin attempts persuasion on Martin to invest in Victorian Marketing, which has declared bankruptcy and is taking desperate measures to re-finance to stay in business. Bella seemingly takes a liking to Gavin, while Martin sees through Gavin’s thin façade of friendship, asking questions about the recent letters that Martin received. Martin ultimately declines to invest, and expresses his feelings of Gavin with Bella.
* A police investigation is conducted at Martins home after Gavin and 8 former female co-workers file a report explaining that Martin raped these 8 peers during his employment with Victorian Marketing. The documents are found and Martin is put in negotiations with the judicial system and Victorian Marketing for Martin to be put on trial for said accusations.
* Gavin has taken a liking to Bella and attempts to steal her from Martin; Bella has apparent feelings of attraction to Gavin, and distances herself from Martin
* Martin at his lowest point hires a shopping-mall lawyer to represent Martin in the case. They find out that Gavin is in fact framing Martin, but can’t use any evidence as it was discovered illegally.
* Accusations are leaked into the news by Gavin. The 8 co-workers announce through news interviews on television that Martin is a rapist.
* As Martin attempts to counteract the accusations, Bella kills Gavin in a harrowing struggle at Gavin’s home after nearly castrating his genitalia during oral sex. It is revealed to have been a product of Riley’s planning. Getting close to Gavin, and to frame him for raping her was her plan. Bella remembers Gavin was part of a group of men, including her ex-boyfriend, who attempted to rape her. During this event, Martin saved her life and Gavin escaped to avoid any association with the event. Bella decided to take her own revenge, regardless of the current accusations with Martin. Bella calls the police and claims to have been kidnapped and raped by Gavin, and took a chance of escape at the opportune moment.
* Gavin makes national television for after his death, and is announced that he was killed by Bella, whom he kidnapped and raped. Afterwards, the eight women retract their accusations on Martin, explaining that they’d been tricked into accusing him. Gavin had lost his career as a manager with Victorian, after they went out of business. In desperation, and a hint of jealousy, meeting Martin at his bar gave him the opportunity to get back on his feet by framing and suing him. He purchased medical and court documentation on Martin from Lexus Nexus to use against him. In interviews with each woman, they explain that each decided to do it for personal gain (Money). That Gavin gave them an opportunity to start their lives right by suing a former co-worker, who’d become a success, for raping them during their employment. All charges against Martin are dropped, thanks to Bella. This turn of events only makes the relationship between Martin and Bella stronger.
* Martin finishes his script, it’s made into a film, and gets together with Riley in the end.

**PART 2 – MY 12 MOVIES**

1. **The Rainmaker (1997) – Francis Ford Coppola**
2. **Shooter (2007) – Antoine Fuqua**
3. **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2009) – Niels Arden Oplev**
4. **Wall Street (1987) – Oliver Stone**
5. **The Firm (1993) – Sydney Pollack**
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**\*Revised**

The Rainmaker (1997)

1. **Who is the Protagonist? –** Rudy Baylor - a recent college graduate that becomes a lawyer and an underdog.
2. **What is the conflict that drives the narrative?** – Rudy takes on a nearly impossible court case against a fraudulent insurance company, after his client – Donny Ray Black - dies of a sickness that could have been avoided if the insurance company accepted Donny’s claim for surgery.
3. **What is the tone of the film?** – The tone, in terms of genre, would be Court Room
Drama. It deals with subject matter that relies on heavy court room battles, giving the story its overall setting for the plot to unravel in a very dramatic way. The feeling of the visual style in this film gives off an old school, slick, southern-type of tone in combination with the music and the performances.
4. **What is the them**e? – The theme of the story, in simplistic terms, could be viewed as Man vs. Society – Being that the hero of the story takes legal action on a large, malicious insurance company. That being said, the center of the story’s theme revolves around Corporate Greed, and how it affects the lives of everyday citizens.
5. **Are the characters relatable?** – If I had to choose an answer, no. There are certain pieces of each character that can relate to people, but not enough to think that they’re real or authentic. The characters had behaviors that felt like cartoon-ish versions of the actors portraying them. The one exceptional character portrayal was Donny Ray Black, who had a very heartfelt performance in this film.
6. The one thing I think that I can take away from this film as I write my story is the concept that Rudy and Kelly’s relationship is based on. The concept that one character does a favor for the other, creating a relationship between them. Later in the story, the other character has to return the favor to the first character in order to keep them out of harm’s way. A concept based on faith in two character’s relationship.

Shooter (2007)

1. **The Protagonist** - The protagonist is Bob Lee Swagger – a former marksman who was exiled after a military operation gone wrong.
2. **The Conflict** – Bob attempts to fight against the government, after he’s framed for an attempted assassination on the president, in order to clear his name.
3. **The Tone** – The tone of this movie as a genre is Action Thriller. It has all the basic concepts of an action film, and also creates high tension through the character becoming Public Enemy #1 for something he didn’t do. The feel of this movie just comes off as a cool and tense thrill ride with a by-the-numbers main character that has good looks and great fighting skills.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this movie is Man vs. Society. It’s very simply about a man who needs to fight the government to clear his name. The center of this story’s theme, however, focuses on Government Corruption.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – No. The reason being, is that the characters feel too staged. A sensual relationship is formed between the male and female leads almost as soon as they meet on-screen, which doesn’t feel genuine. There are many other examples as well. The characters just didn’t feel like real people from watching them in this movie.
6. What I can take from this movie, is how the main character is portrayed on the news as a criminal, even though he’s innocent of the crime he’s accused of. The media blows his situation out of proportion, making him look like an evil individual.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2009)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is Mikael Blomkvist – A disgraced journalist who loses a majority of his money to a wealthy business tycoon who accuses Mikael of libel.
2. **The Conflict** – Blomkvist aims to expunge his convictions and prove that his accuser, Hans Wennerstrom, is a fraud after a wealthy and eccentric recluse, Henrik Vanger, offers evidence to Mikael that Wennerstrom lied in court. The only catch is that Vanger will only give up this evidence upon Mikael finding out who killed Henriks niece, Harriet.
3. **The Tone** – The tone of this movie is morbidity, and the densification of the human mind - the story delves deep into the actions of rape, torture, and murder. The genre is a crime thriller, but the feel is a dark and emotional portrayal of what a damaged soul feels after a traumatic experience and how they would deal with it.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this film is Friendship and Morality. It’s about how two very different, damaged people can bandage each other’s wounds, and ultimately help each other get back up and come out of hiding from the world. It’s a concept that can relate to anyone’s life and how they struggle.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The reason is, that the characters are portrayed as flawed individuals. They struggle with personal choices that put them in awful situations. But even in terrible situations, the characters find a way to push through their barriers and rejoin society. The performances were authentic, being that the audience couldn’t tell if the actors knew what they were going to say next. They also have real personalities. Some are damaged, others are perverse, and then there are also heartfelt personalities.
6. What I can take away from this film is the relationship between Lisbeth and Mikael. They have an intimate relationship, but also a very professional one. They form a relationship over time, and create a true friendship in the process. Not just an intimate relationship. Another thing is how Mikael is portrayed in the media, and how an individual has caused the pain that he goes through.

Wall Street (1987)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is Bud Fox, a young stockbroker who get entangled in a world of greed and manipulation.
2. **The Conflict** – The Conflict is that Bud Fox must fight against his employer, Gordon Gekko, after Fox learns that Gekko plans to dissolve the company to gain incredible wealth and leave all other workers unemployed.
3. **The Tone** – The tone, in terms of genre, is a Crime Drama. It feels like how life would be working on Wall Street. Everyone always puts themselves and their money first.
4. **The Theme** – The theme is Excess. Several of the characters revolve around an ideal consisting of never being satisfied, and always reaching for more and more. The story puts the hero through a number of conflicts that pit wealth against honesty.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The reason is, every human has a basic instinct of putting themselves before the rest of the world. Wall Street and its characters are the perfect portrayal of the human condition.
6. What I can take away from this film is the concept of greed. Greed plays a large part in my story, being that the antagonist is screwing a former employee out of his recent fortune.

The Firm (1993)

1. **The Protagonist** – The Protagonist is Mitch McDeere – a law student who becomes a lawyer at a prestigious firm.
2. **The Conflict** – Mitch must find a way to keep his license as a lawyer, and quit the sinister law firm he works for without getting killed or blackmailed.
3. **The Tone** - The tone of this film feels like a mystery and a thriller. It starts out like any other court room drama might feel like, and turns into a dark and mysterious tale of corruption, blackmail, and murder. That being said, a certain aspect gives the tone a mixed feeling of dread and intensity because of the stakes that the story raises.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of the film is Man vs. Society. An individual has to take on a prestigious, yet corrupt law firm for his own good after serious implications of blackmail and threats of death arise. Another theme could also be the loss of innocence. An idealistic main character finds out some bitter but true realities about how the world is today, and changes his outlook because of them.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The main character gives the audience a coming of age story that can relate to many people. It shows how an idealistic individual can change their beliefs after an event that shows them how the world truly is.
6. What I can take from this story is the concept of blackmail. Mitch is threatened with blackmail after someone takes pictures of him being unfaithful to his wife on a business trip. This affects how Mitch makes his decisions for the rest of the story.

The Ides of March (2011)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist of the film is Stephen Meyers – an idealistic staffer on a presidential campaign for sitting Governor Mike Morris.
2. **The Conflict** – Stephen must find a way to regain his job after accidentally involving himself in dirty politics during the crucial point of the campaign.
3. **The Tone** – The tone feels very much like the time period of a presidential election. The cold setting, the characters physique and behaviors, along with the visual style and the music. These factors make for a dramatic story to be told in a very unique fashion.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of the film is Politics is Brutal. Throughout the film, Stephen comes across several obstacles pertaining to the corruption of his well-being by his dishonest peers that surround him.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The reason is because of how the characters are written and performed. The audience can relate to Stephen because of his personality. His personality is that of a young man who loves his job, but has a change of heart after he discovers the unfortunate reality of his chosen profession. He’s written to be a human being and Ryan Gosling portrays the character as such.
6. What I can take away from this film is how the main character has more than one conflict to deal with in the story. Having more than one conflict raises the stakes and creates a more satisfying payoff in the end because of it.

Gone Girl (2014)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist of the film is Nick Dunne – a husband who literally loses his wife under strange circumstances.
2. **The Conflict** – Nick Dunne must attempt to counteract accusations that he murdered his wife, Amy, after she goes missing.
3. **The tone** – The tone of the film is dark, but from a human standpoint. The subject matter can be dreadful, but it’s portrayed how circumstances like this would truly happen in real life. The tone isn’t always serious. It smoothly shifts from mysterious, to intense, and ultimately to humorous. The tone, to me, feels like a human situation.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this film is that you never truly know someone, even if you’re married to them. The subject matter argues that people pretend to be perfect to attract someone of the opposite sex. If two people grow around each other pretending to be this perfect projection of themselves, eventually they get tired and can’t keep it up any longer. A subject that can be relevant to a large amount of marriages today.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The reason is that the characters are portrayed so specifically, that they truly feel like real people. They go through situations that real people go through all the time. The performances truly make the characters what they are. Each character has his/her own quirks or behaviors, utilizing every actors skill set to their maximum abilities.
6. What I can take away from this film is the psychological mindsets that the characters have. The characters create facades of themselves or they hide information from other characters. State of mind can ultimately lead the characters on their own journeys, good or bad.

Michael Clayton (2007)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist of the story is Michael Clayton – a fixer at a law firm that makes troubling investigations disappear.
2. **The Conflict**- The conflict is - Michael Clayton is hired to make a situation, involving a lawyer at his firm having a mental breakdown in a deposition, disappear.
3. **The Tone** – The tone of this film feels very dark. It shows a character go up against extreme stress in a rough situation of his own, which makes him question his own career choices and his morals as a human being. In combination with emotional performances, dark source material, smooth visual style, and suspenseful soundtrack, Michael Clayton is a true crime thriller in the finest fashion.
4. **The Theme** – The theme is Man vs. Himself, and then Man vs. Society. Michael has to question himself before taking control of the external conflict presented in this film. It’s ultimately a story of humanity, and how a man questions his morals in order to solve the bigger problem at hand.
5. **Relatable Character**s? – Yes. The reason is because the characters face internal conflict and a change of morality that deal with the moral compass that every human should keep an eye on. It relates to people in how they look at their life choices, and how they can still change them for the better.
6. What I can take away from this film is the different personalities the characters have. Michael and the rest of the cast have such a calmness to them, and yet a craziness that I think everyone has. It gives the characters an authenticity that can’t be copied.

Bubble (2005)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is Martha – a middle aged woman who works in a doll factory.
2. **The Conflict** – The conflict is Martha must find out how a local woman is murdered, after Martha is found guilty of killing her.
3. **The Tone** – The tone feels dreary and almost depressing. The atmosphere of the film, along with the visual style, the unknown actors that give the story a bland and dull feel, the music, and the direction all cooperate in making this story feel like the telling of a sad and lonely place.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this story is Individual vs. Self. It deals with the characters state of mind and how lethal it can be without actually knowing it.
5. **Relatable Characters?** Yes. The fact that the film used actual people from the location in the movie makes it feel all the more relatable. That’s a typically hard thing to accomplish. The actors give the audience a documentary-like story told through the eyes of actual people.
6. Unfortunately, I didn’t have anything I could take away from this film for my story.

The Constant Gardener (2005)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is Justin Quayle – An English diplomat and recent widower.
2. **The Conflict** – Justin Quayle attempts to finish what his late wife started, uncovering a deadly drug trial that was rushed in order to save large amounts of money.
3. **The Tone** – The tone of this film feels very political. Taking place in multiple countries, including Africa and England, the story is told through a documentary-style direction along with committed performances that add to the story’s effectiveness.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this film is Corporate Greed. Focusing on his late wife’s investigation, for which she was murdered, Justin attempts to bring her justice and finish her work. It’s all about how the Government is willing to kill in order to steady their cash-flow.
5. **Relatable Characters?** Yes. The characters are portrayed through brilliant performances, but are also written in a very authentic way. Typically spy movies end up very cliché with cartoon-ish characters. But this film shows espionage how it most-likely feels like in real life.
6. What I can take away from this film is the relationship between Tessa and Justin. I like how Tessa hides her true objective throughout the film, which ultimately leads to her own murder.

Eyes Wide Shut (1999)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is William Harford – A family doctor.
2. **The Conflict** – William goes out on a night of sexual exploration after his wife Alice admits she almost cheated on him once. Dr. Harford ends up on a road to a place that will change his life forever.
3. **The Tone** – The tone is very suspenseful. The scenes are very long and dragged out to add to the tension of the moment. Along with this is a sense of betrayal after a very sensory description of how Alice almost cheated on William. This creates a feeling of loneliness, as William walks the streets of New York.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of the story is Marriage and Sexuality. It explores how a person reacts to their significant other admitting to infidelity in an unapologetic way. It also explores how that reaction can lead a person into a dangerous world of unexplainable mystery if they’re not careful.
5. **Relatable Characters?** Yes. The characters are relatable because they go through situations that could be very hard to go through in real life, but really do happen. It shows a part of the human psyche and exposes it in an unapologetic fashion, showing how curiosity can sometimes get the better of us. The characters are psychologically detailed.
6. What I can take away from this film is the “Fidelio” concept. Similar to that of what I could take from the Rainmaker, Fidelio is how two people are faithful to one another because one performed a kind act for the other.

The Drop (2014)

1. **The Protagonist** – The protagonist is Bob Saginowski – a bartender with a mysterious past.
2. **The Conflict** – Bob and his Cousin Marv have to find the money that was robbed from their bar after the Russian owners put pressure on them.
3. **The Ton**e – The tone, for me, felt nostalgic. It gave me the remembrance of my childhood growing up in Dayton. The atmosphere, the setting, the cold weather, among the very authentic characters give this film a sentimental tone.
4. **The Theme** – The theme of this movie is that you don’t truly know who someone is unless they want you to. Focusing on a character that seems harmless turns out to be a killer, and kills someone in the process of the audience finding out this information.
5. **Relatable Characters?** – Yes. The characters are flawed, and the actors truly become the characters written on the page. The dialogue was either written to feel like real conversations, or the actors were able to portray it. The characters added to my feeling of nostalgia.
6. What I can take from this story is the relationship between Bob and Nadia. Their relationship is so honest and genuine. They show each other’s flaws and still forgive each other. They form an unbreakable friendship because they don’t try to act like something that they’re not. That is ultimately what I need for my main character’s relationship with the female character.