Study Questions for Kolker, *Film, form, and Culture*

**Introduction**

**Key terms:** culture; ideology; subculture

1. Why should we think seriously about film?

2. What is the relationship between culture and ideology?

3. What does Kolker mean when he says that film is artificial and constructed? Why is the form of film important?

4. Why is the “worst thing we can say about a film is that it is “unrealistic” and why do we find films “realistic”?

5. What is the relationship between culture and film? Why is it important?

**Chapter 1 - Image and Reality**

**Key terms:** image; composition; reality

1. What is the “truth of image” and how is this illustrated by Oliver Stone in *Natural Born Killers*?

2. What is the “urge to represent ‘reality’” and what motivates it?

3. What is Kolker’s definition of reality and what does it mean to conceive of “reality as image”? How do photographic and cinematic images “manipulate” reality? In what sense, then, is film “illusion” and how is it “a reality machine”?

4. What did the development of movies supply for the culture?

**Chapter 2 – Formal Structures: How Films Tell Their Stories**

**Key terms:** studio system; mise-en-scene; classic Hollywood style; shot; editing; take; cut; continuity cutting; scene; sequence; montage; long-shot; long-take; point of view

1. Generally, how is the evolution of the photographic image into the moving narrative image the story of the making and comprehension of illusions?

2. Specifically, what is the relationship among film, imagination, culture, ideology, and economics? Ultimately, how does this relationship between the audience and the films they view?

3. What is the classical Hollywood style and what are the basic principles for fabricating the image in film?
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4. How does the whole film emerge from its parts? How are the parts made invisible?

5. Why is it important to be “conscious” of everything in a film by “reading” it? That is, why must we make the invisible in films visible?

Chapter 3 – The Story Tellers of Film

1. What is collaboration and why is it so essential in film making?

2. What specific roles are played by those who collaborate in the production of a film?

3. Kolker concludes that the actual practice of filmmaking—despite the existence of a few directorial stars and some who have more control over their work than others—has “pretty much reverted back to the control of the producer and studio chief. Why does he believe this to be true?

Chapter 4 – Film as Cultural Practice

**Key terms: text; culture; subculture; popular culture; cultural studies**

**Take note of the useful summary of the major points of the book with which this chapter opens.**

1. What, according to Kolker, is the target audience of filmgoers to whom many producers believe they must appeal and what kind of films does this lead them to produce? Why does this produce condemnation?

2. In what sense is culture to be seen as “text” and why does Kolker think it important to “read” culture?

3. What is the difference between [high] culture and [low] popular culture? What are the implications for Kolker’s observation that “mass culture is commercial culture”?

4. Why are splits between the subculture that enjoys the products of popular culture important?

5. What are cultural studies and upon what do they focus?

6. What was the “critique of American popular culture” that developed in the 1950s and early 1960s?

7. What is text and context in cultural studies? What does it mean to say individuals receive and negotiate with a text in popular culture? In cultural analysis, what does it mean to negotiate, unpack, and reread cultural texts such as films? What is the role of judgment and values in this kind of cultural analysis?
Chapter 5 – The Stories Told by Film

Key terms: master narrative; master fictions; narrative constraints; genre; subgenre

1. What are master narratives and dominant fictions? Why are they important to films and revealing about the culture that produces and consumes them?

2. What are narrative constraints? Why are they important?

3. What are the major genres and subgenres? Why are they important?