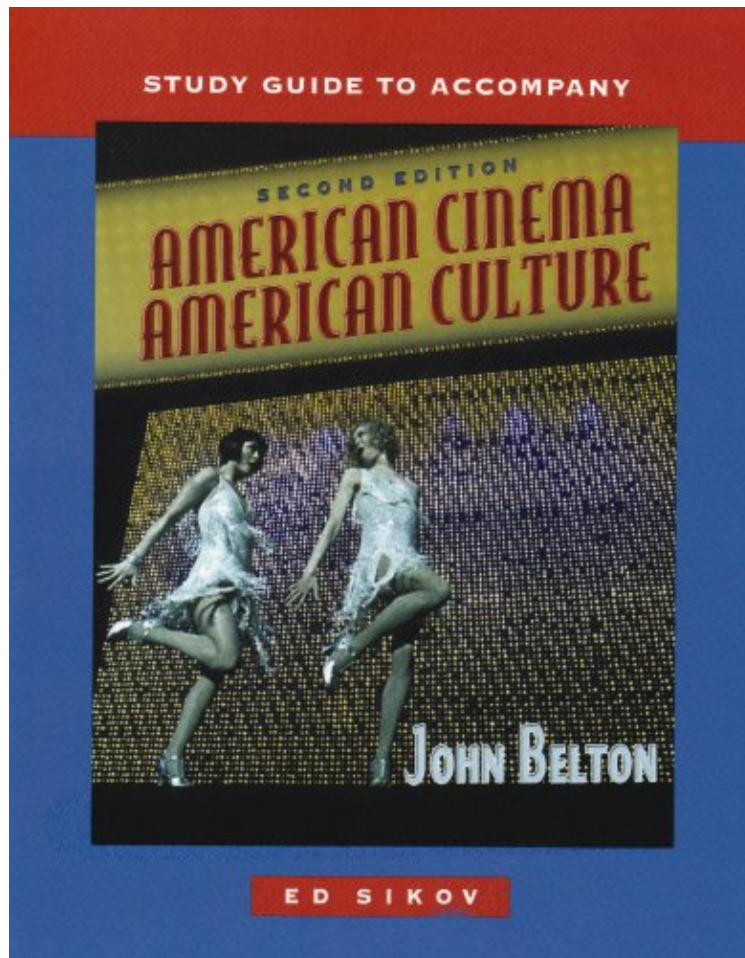


(Download) Study Guide to Accompany American Cinema/American Culture

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John Belton, Ed Sikov

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John Belton, Ed Sikov : Study Guide to Accompany American Cinema/American Culture before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Study Guide to Accompany American Cinema/American Culture:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. I'll Never Dismiss a Black and White Film Again! By Michael Gillett There are three parts to the film course "American Cinema, American Culture". They are the text written by John Belton, a 13 part PBS series titled "American Cinema" by Annenberg Media, and this study guide. The study guide, a casual viewing of the episodes and trips to the local video store were the best way for me to learn the material presented. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MAIN TEXT, THE STUDY GUIDE, AND THE SERIES It's not that there is anything wrong with the textbook. But it is priced at college textbook prices. It has information well presented and makes good points. But the important points are made in the television programs and the study guide. And while the text can talk about film noir, the video can show film noir. That's a much better way to teach the topic.

Yet while the video can show you examples of film noir, this study guide has a few pages of introduction to film noir and then two lists of film noir to select screenings from. Thirty-nine titles are on the Classic Noir Films list, and 17 on a list titled Some Film Noir Remakes, Updates, and Pseudo-Noirs. After the list are suggestions on how to watch the films and what to look for. It has you jot down some notes about what you're watching, and it has you pick up on things you might not have expected. Then comes a section that asks you to do so self retrospection on the film. "Was I surprised at their moral ambiguity, or did I expect them to depict the world as essentially corrupt and threatening?", is one of the questions the guide asks about noir films. I used film noir as an example in this review because of this question. Until I took this course I didn't give black and white films much time. I eagerly dismissed them for something along the flavor of Star Wars. I was extremely (and pleasantly) surprised by what I saw in film noir films, and I've found an exciting new genre to explore. After these questions are a couple of background notes on the people in the series. It is nice to know who is talking on screen. Then comes Suggested Readings, Exercises and Assignments, and a Self Test to finish off the lesson.

A NOTE ON PRICE I got my third edition of the text here at for around \$65US. I got the 6DVD set and a second edition textbook from ebay for \$160US, and I got the second edition study guide for \$50US from . I've also seen the first edition of the study guide (it's cover is black and white and has a lion) and there weren't many apparent changes. I've seen it around \$1US used on . The PBS series is available for free at Annenberg Media's website. It is streaming video and in poor quality, but as long as it's up it's free. There may also be future airing of the show on PBS. I did find one library that had a VHS copy of the series, but it was an older version missing the last three episodes.

HOW THE STUDY GUIDE IS LAID OUT There are 11 units in the book each laid out like the Film Noir one. These units match up with the PBS series and have corresponding chapters in the main text. There are three introductory unit: The Hollywood Style; The Studio System; and The Star. There are five genres: The Western; The Musical; American Comedy; War and Cinema; and Film Noir. And the last three are recent history units: Hollywood in the Age of Television; The Film School Generation; and Into the 21st Century. After this there are three supplementary units (at least in the second edition, I'm not sure about the first edition). The three supplementary units are: Film Language; Thinking and Writing about Film; and Into the 21st Century. At the end of the guide is an answers section and a glossary. The guide's key element is it's lists of recommended viewing. It has a wide selection to choose from and encourages you to explore others not listed. The idea is that you should choose a film that interests you somehow, yet is within the material in the unit. I was groaning when the musical unit came up. But, the selections in the guide range from 1930s films to 'Moulin Rouge' and 'South Park: Bigger, Longer Uncut'. I choose the latter and after dipping my toe in the water I'm ready to try something deeper. This philosophy holds throughout the book, to the extent that in the first chapter, The Hollywood Style, the book says "Feel free, then, to view any movie you choose - any genre, any period." It also gives a list of more than 30 films to help get you started ranging from a 1919 silent film to a 2004 Tom Hanks film. It also doesn't give you a synopsis of the films. I found this a flaw in the main text where a complete run down of several films is given, ending and all. Anyone reading the text without seeing 'Citizen Kane' first would have the experience ruined by knowing everything about the film. The guide lists 'Citizen Kane' between 'Catch Me If You Can' and 'City Lights' and mentions it several times in the unit's overview. I should also mention here that it is a flaw that other guides like Roger Ebert's and Leonard Maltin's books have. They tell you about the film's plot instead of letting you experience it first hand. What it gives you is a guide to take to the video store. All the films listed are available on DVD. The guide only covers American films as that is what the course covers - hence the name "American Cinema, American Culture". I feel that this is a flaw but I fully understand the author's reason. It's the same reason that television shows aren't covered. You can't teach everything at once. You've got to draw the line somewhere and that is at American films presented theatrically. At least it gives you a good footing for adventuring out into foreign films.

WANT TO HAVE A GOOD FILM NIGHT? I have a home theater in my house. I also live 60 miles from a major city with an art-house theater. I'm going to use the techniques shown to me in this study guide on my friends. I'll use the study guide to select a film, maybe show them an episode from the PBS series, give them a synopsis of the style of the film (not of the film itself), tell them what to look for, and then show/see the film. Afterwords we'll discuss the film over coffee using the questions from the study guide to get things going. I've already done it and had great results and a wonderful time.

FINAL WORDS While the textbook will remain on my shelves for years to come it'll just gather dust. I did shell out the cash for the 6 DVD set but the video quality is poor and a one time viewing is mostly enough for me. I may pull out an episode from time to time for review, but I see myself showing to others more often. What I will get the most mileage out of will be this study guide. If I had a Netflix account my queue would be full of the films listed in this book and there are over 300 films listed! A trip to the video store would benefit from a cursory glance through this book, and it will forever sit next to my computer where I can have it handy for that trip to the website. As a matter of fact I've already started a database built off this book to help me purchase Blu-rays in the future.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Could use an update

By Rocco Dormarunno

As an instructor, Belton/Sikov's "Study Guide to Accompany American Cinema/American Culture", as part of an internet based course, suits my needs adequately. The writing is clear and accessible, especially for those students who are not majoring in film or the liberal arts. Of course, the text is very informative and convincing. The assignments and exercises are, for the most part, relevant and even entertaining. I liked the lists of suggested viewings

which are exhaustive. My only negative has to do with the book being dated. The previous reviewer evaluated the book five years after publication, and here I am nearly five years after that. Things in American culture and especially in film change rapidly. And, as technology makes films more accessible and practically instantaneous, the need for an update is becoming critical. Rocco Dormarunno The College of New Rochelle 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great study guide By Happy Soccer Mom Great study guide to the textbook.

Second edition American Cinema American Culture is an introductory course in American film and culture which brings Hollywood into clearer analytical focus. An art form an industry, and a system of representation and communication, American film is a complicated and profoundly influential element of American culture.