

Watching the film *Into the Wild*

Here are some questions and comments to guide your initial viewing of the film.

Opening (0:27-0:44): What is the block of text (quote of poem by Lord Byron) shown at the beginning called? What purpose does it serve? What is the impact of the music playing while this excerpt is shown?

First 'action' scene (0:44-01:15): How does this opening differ from the way Krakauer begins his story? What is the purpose? What is the effect of Sean Penn's choice?

Notice how Penn establishes the setting (with chalk graffiti on the train) (1:16-1:46)

Pay attention to the superimposed text over shots of the Yukon and Alaska (1:46-3:20). What is the text? What is its purpose? What is the impact of the text on the viewer's interpretation? How might the viewer (who may not have read the book) interpret this text? How do Penn's techniques shape the meaning we derive from the images?

In the next scene with the truck (3:25-4:49): This is the real James Gallien driving the truck, and the scene is shot on location. Notice how the choices made by Penn contribute veracity to the film.

In the sequence following the "drop off" of 'Alex' (5:00-13:30), how does Penn characterize Chris? What techniques are used, and how do these contribute to the audience interpretation?

Notice the flashback to Atlanta (Emory University), signaled by the bagpipes and the "prologue" subtitle. Why does Penn go back to this point in Chris's story? What is the impact of his sequencing of events?

How are Chris's parents characterized in this segment (13:30-20:12)? For example, Penn chooses to have Chris read a poem by Sharon Olds ("I Go Back to May 1937") to Carine; what does the poem suggest about Billie and Walt? What other techniques are employed?

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