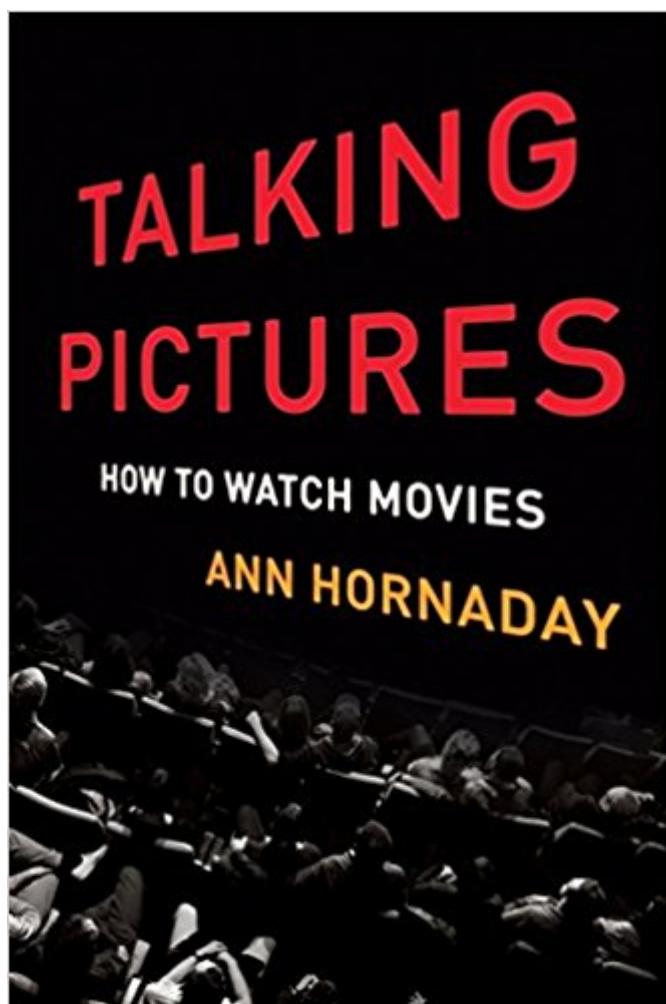


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# Talking Pictures: How To Watch Movies



## **Synopsis**

Whether we are trying to impress a date after an art-house film screening or discussing Oscar nominations with friends, we all need ways to watch and talk about movies. But with so much variety between an Alfred Hitchcock thriller and a Nora Ephron romantic comedy, how can everyday viewers determine what makes a good movie? In Talking Pictures, veteran film critic Ann Hornaday walks us through the production of a typical movie—from writing the script and casting to the final sound edit—and explains how to evaluate each piece of the process. How do we know if a film is well-written, above and beyond snappy dialogue? What constitutes a great screen performance? What goes into praiseworthy cinematography, editing, and sound design? And what does a director really do? Full of engaging anecdotes and interviews with actors and filmmakers, Talking Pictures will help us see movies in a whole new light—not just as fans, but as film critics in our own right.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Ann Hornaday provides a pleasantly calm, eminently sensible, down-the-middle primer for the movie lover-amateur, professional or Twitter centric orator—who would like to acquire and sharpen basic viewing skills."—New York Times Book Review "[An] illuminating new book for anyone who wants more from the movies than popcorn and thrills.... Talking Pictures reflects Hornaday's 20-plus years of writing about movies. Her career has given her great access to the people who make the movies, and some of her anecdotes can be fascinating."—Washington Post "[Ann Hornaday] offers her insights, opinions and finely tuned observations on actors and acting, camera work, editing, sound and music, and the other elements of film—and how they can all combine to truly make a

movie good, bad or just so-so."-Parade"A master class in filmmaking and a celebration of why we love the movies."-Booklist"[Talking Pictures] gives the reader tools for watching films more intentionally and with more discerning taste."-Publishers Weekly"[Hornaday] has conducted extensive interviews with film folk over the years, which adds an informed, insider's quality to her discussions... a user-friendly, nonintimidating guide to appreciating movies."-Kirkus"Ann Hornaday has delivered one of the best books of this genre, a truly original take on filmmaking. Bringing together deep insights from the top people in all areas of the craft along with her own critical eye, Hornaday inspires serious and casual movie fans alike to appreciate and enjoy movies. Talking Pictures draws on examples from classics of the past and current films to deliver a masterclass in filmmaking, criticism, and the pleasures of watching movies."- Bob Berney, Head of Marketing & Distribution, Studios"In this essential book Ann Hornaday explores the unique alchemy of filmmaking through its various disciplines, and manages to explain the unexplainable. With clarity and compassion she demystifies the brilliance of Groundhog Day, breaks down how the editor on a film is the audience's chief surrogate, and ultimately puts her finger on what we crave every time the lights go down in a movie theater: 'the singular joy that comes from authentic human connection.' This book is a true gift to all filmmakers and film lovers."-Albert Berger, Academy Award-nominated Producer of Nebraska, Cold Mountain, and Little Miss Sunshine, among others"An urgently needed guide to film literacy written by one of our great critics."-Mark Boal, Academy Award-winning Screenwriter and Producer"Ann Hornaday knows movies, but more importantly, she knows how to write about movies for a diverse readership. This book is an extension of that essential talent, a clear-eyed assessment of what makes this art form so engaging and how to ask hard questions of it. Anyone remotely intrigued by the filmmaking process will learn something new about it-I know I did-and come away with a fresh toolkit for debating movies old and new. Hornaday's book is a quintessential reminder that movies are a major art form, and it's a must-read for anyone who feels the same way."-Eric Kohn, chief critic, Indiewire

Ann Hornaday is a film critic at the Washington Post and was a finalist for the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in criticism. Hornaday lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

An excellent discussion of introductory film appreciation. The author does a very good job of making a potentially pretentious subject more accessible to those who want to explore why they like one movie more than another, without diving into which independent art house film goes best with a sense of smugness and some avocado toast. The book is broken into the essential building blocks

of the film-making process and provides a list at the end of each chapter of both classic and contemporary movies that excel at that particular element.

I was interested in the book because I have read the author's reviews in the *Washington Post* for years and the reviews in both the *Post* and *Time* were positive. However, you never know how these guides for the lay person types of books will turn out--with them being slogs often enough. However I found *Talking Pictures* well written and it added dimensions to my understanding of not only movies, but television series and to an extent literature as well. Very readable and it went quickly. The films used to illustrate concepts were well chosen and one benefit of the book has been to see (or re-see) films recommended. One caveat: many of the descriptive passages were structured along the lines of "it could be either this or that, or this other thing or that other thing, or this or that..." it wasn't annoying but as the book progressed it did have kind of an "ear worm" effect to it.

In the knowledgeable and insightful writing style that readers of *The Washington Post* have come to know and respect, Ms Hornaday offers a way to look at films that is beneficial to casual film fans and also to professional filmmakers. She exhibits a deep understanding of the mechanics behind the art of filmmaking as she analyzes the various components of the process. And she draws on a vast bank of interviews she's conducted over her career with leading figures in the industry to add enlightening color to her analyses. This book is an invigorating read -- entertaining as well as informative.

Ann has written an extremely entertaining and enjoyable book for the average movie buff. I have read several books in this category and this is one of the best at citing examples from movies that most movie goers have seen, rather than referencing predominately artsy or foreign films that I do not have time to watch (yet). She clearly enjoys movie realism (verisimilitude) and that is apparent in most of her favorites and examples, but she does not ignore others genres (like her discussion on all the sounds Lucas created in *Star Wars*). This truly is a great read for film lovers and it will have you wanting to go back and re-watch some outstanding films with a greater appreciation and enjoyment.

A worthwhile read that breaks down the major components of film making to take armchair movie

critics from "I just didn't like the film" to "I thought the film didn't work because . . ." A way to understand and speak knowledgeably about what made a film work or not work. A fast, only slightly technical read, as a movie lover I found the book hard to put down. The author supports her analysis with a wealth of movie examples for reference.

Who doesn't love Ann? I've had to go back and watch movies that I own that she highlights in the book and I see them with a whole new light.

Did you ever go to a movie and say to yourself: "Boy, that was a stinker!" Recently, that was my exact feeling after watching the fiasco, "The Mummy." I thought, "Where is Lon Chaney, Jr., the mummy in that 1941 film classic, when you needed him the most?" This 2017 version of the mummy legend lacked a lot; especially a cogent plot, careful editing and a steady hand at the directorial helm. It was literally all over the place. Maybe, this was because it had three writers. Even Tom Cruise in the lead - doing stunts, too - couldn't save "The Mummy" from flopping artistically, and (more painfully), at the box office as well. On the flip side, one of my fave flicks was "L.A. Confidential." It came out in 1997. I recall watching it down in historic Fellini's Point on Thames Street, in Baltimore, MD, at George Figgs' now-defunct Orpheum Cinema. It had everything you might want in a movie: a great plot; terrific actors - such as Russell Crowe, the lovely Kim Bassinger and Kevin Spacey (n/k/a Francis Underwood of "House of Cards" fame) - action; writing; top notch directing; and lots of unforgettable scenes. Kim Bassinger was such a major hottie in this film that Crowe (a hard-nosed cop) and Guy Pearce (another LA detective) were beating the hell out of each other just to get her attention. My favorite scene from that movie is where James Cromwell (as a crooked police detective) snuffs out Danny DeVito (a smarty pants editor of a scandal magazine) with that "hush-hush" line, while cutting off his breathing. The film was based on a riveting novel by James Ellroy. "L.A. Confidential" also had a surprise ending! Now, there is a book out to guide movie goers about how to fully appreciate a movie - good and bad, alike. Of course, it has something to say about my fave - "L.A. Confidential." It also explains in details the prime ingredients that contribute to a film's final outcome. The title is: "Talking Pictures: How to Watch Movies." Its author is Ann Hornaday. Her day job is reviewing films for the "Washington Post." Along the way, Hornaday also did a stint movie reviewing with the "Baltimore Sun" and at the "Austin American-Statesman." Hornaday uses seven sections in her book to analyze the main

attributes of a movie. You will recognize most of these: screenwriting, acting, production design, cinematography, editing, sound and music, and the biggie, the maker or breaker - directing. In practicing her craft over the years, Hornaday has interviewed many talented people in Hollywood and beyond, who make movies for a living. This has included: directors, screenwriters, producers, actors, sound technicians, cinematographers and editors. So, her book has some inside stuff from the experts themselves, and usually what they have to say is right on target. Hornaday works their astute comments skillfully into each of her seven sections. Before launching her career as a movie reviewer, Hornaday was given some guidance from a fellow journalist. He suggested asking herself these three relevant questions: "What was the artist trying to achieve? Did they achieve it? And, was it worth doing?" Hornaday added that those key questions have served her as a "North star" throughout her career. They also happen to be the advice that the legendary Goethe gave on reviewing theatre. All of the above, Hornaday suggests, gets you to that mother of all questions: What make a movie "good"? And conversely, what makes a movie - "bad"? After each chapter in the book - I really like this part - Hornaday included examples of movies that captured the best practices of a particular cinematic discipline. For this segment, she also cited films from Hollywood's "Golden Age," right up till the present moment to make her points. Hornaday underscored how the hundreds of artists that she has interviewed over the last 25 years or so kept the "highest ideals" of filmmaking in their minds during the challenging creative process. Her book will help the reader see movies "in a new light," not just as a fan but as a film critic in their own right. The writing style of Hornaday is straight forward and easy to follow. Her book, which I am strongly recommending, is not only for the movie buff and the wannabe movie buffs, but for a general audience as well. There are plenty of gems in it.

Unless you were a film major, and maybe even if you were, you're bound to learn something about making and watching movies. Her use of both contemporary and older (not all "classic") films for reference made we want to see old favorites again and see some I would never given a thought to.

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