

## Analytical Essay

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This essay will be completed in several steps:

October 28 – in-class brainstorming  
November 4 – first draft due  
November 11 – in-class revision  
November 18 – final draft due

In this essay, you will analyze how music is used in a cartoon (*A Corny Concerto*, 1943) with the intention of showing what attitudes the cartoon conveys, how the music supports those attitudes, and why they matter. This cartoon is comprised of two short mini-cartoons within a framing device of Elmer Fudd as the concert emcee. You can write about either mini-cartoon or both in your essay.

Background information:

- In the 1930s and 1940s, audiences at movie theatres would expect to see a newsreel, followed by one or two cartoons, serialized short adventure stories, and then the main attraction (the movie); previews of upcoming releases (trailers) were often shown after (trailing) the movie.
- The score for this cartoon consists of (very) abridged versions of two pieces by Johann Strauss II (1825-99), *Tales from Vienna Woods*, Op. 325 (1868) and *The Blue Danube Waltz*, Op. 314 (1866). Johann Strauss II was an Austrian composer who mostly composed light (entertaining) music for both concerts and dancing.
- All *Merrie Melodies* cartoons produced by Warner Bros. feature classical music soundtracks; the animation process began with selecting the music and then devising animation and characters to match it. The studio also owned sheet music and recording businesses.

The essay will consist of:

- 1) **Introduction.** The introduction should introduce the topic of your essay. It should state the cartoon that you'll be discussing, the specific piece(s) of music you'll be analyzing, and the musical elements you'll be focusing on. State clearly what meaning or message you think that this cartoon conveys.
- 2) **Approximately 2 pages of musical analysis.** Musical analysis requires both description of the musical sounds using textbook vocabulary as well as "so what" (showing why those features are significant or meaningful). For this section of the essay, you must choose two musical features (e.g., melody, instrumentation, rhythm, etc.) to discuss at length (one paragraph per feature):
  - a. Describe the musical feature accurately and sufficiently.
  - b. Describe how the musical feature is paired with the animation. Consider things like timing, events, mood, specific characters, emotional content, colors.

- c. Show why this musical feature is important for the overall sense of meaning the cartoon conveys.
- 3) **Approximately 1 page of discussing social issues that arise with this cartoon.** In this section of the essay, you will do even more critical thinking by considering the implications of this cartoon's message. This can take several forms, either hypothesizing about US society in 1943, drawing upon knowledge you already have of US society in 1943, and US society in 2016. Do not answer both of the following sets of questions; only choose one to explore deeply and show why your responses to it matter:
  - a. What does this cartoon tell you about 1943 US society (the way it is, how it wants to be, what values or ideals it holds)? In what ways are these values still held today? Why does it matter if these values exist?
  - b. What does this cartoon tell you about the role of classical music in US society in 1943? How does this role compare with the prominence of classical music in today's society? Based on this cartoon, do you think that people in 1943 were more or less comfortable or familiar with classical music than people are today? Why does it matter that such differences exist?
- 4) **Conclusion.** In an analytical essay, the conclusion should show how your analysis is worthwhile in other instances, not just the piece you've analyzed here. It opens the doors for your process to be applied to other cartoons, films, or music by showing why your approach is worthwhile (what kinds of questions it can answer, what kinds of questions it can't answer, and why those questions are worth answering). The conclusion is not a repetition of your introduction or the points you made in the essay.

**This is not a research essay, and this is not a research-based course.** There is no reason to do any research for this essay. Everything that you need to complete it is already in your possession: ears for listening and critical thinking skills to infer or hypothesize about how people may react to this cartoon and its music. Do not turn to the Internet to prepare this essay.

### **Formatting.**

- 12-point font
- Do not use bold font
- Double spaced
- 1" margins
- Left justify
- No blank lines between paragraphs
- 3-4 pages (no fewer than 3, no more than 4)
- Do not include a heading.
- Include a catchy, interesting, and descriptive title for your essay at the top of the page (also 12-point font)

### **First draft, due November 4:**

- Rubric with your name and section number; stapled to
- First draft