

Episode 75 – BE A MOVIE AND TV DETECTIVE

SHOW NOTES

Assignment #1: *Top Gun: Maverick*

Before Maverick's final mission begins, write down every skill, lesson, or seemingly small moment that later becomes essential to the climax.

Detective setup/payoff Questions: Investigate the links:

- Which moments are actually setups? Which become major payoffs? What did the filmmakers prepare you for without you realizing it?

Go back and watch it again and see how many more you find.

Assignment #2: *Oppenheimer*

Watch the first hour and keep a notebook.

Detective character Questions: Every time a new character is introduced, ask:

- Why are they in the story? What information do they represent? How might they affect Oppenheimer later?

After the film, see how many of your predictions were correct.

Assignment #3: *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

This film introduces a lot of seemingly random ideas.

Detective Work: Making your "murder wall":

Keep a list of:

- Strange objects - Odd dialogue - Bizarre visual moments - setups - Emotional callbacks - Thematic symbols - Comedy that later became drama

Assignment #4 – *A Quiet Place*

This film is a master class on showing versus telling

Watch how tension is created without relying on dialogue.

Detective Work: Count how often suspense comes from:

- Silence - Camera movement - Character reactions - Sound design

Notice how much storytelling happens before anyone speaks.

DO THIS and you're no longer just watching, you're watching it like a filmmaker.

TV

Assignment #1: *The Last of Us*

Challenge: Building a World Through Character

Watch the pilot and track how the show introduces its world without stopping the story. Detective Questions:

- What do we learn about the world? What rules does it have? What information is revealed through action instead of explanation? When does the story stop being about the apocalypse and become about the characters? Why does the episode spend so much time with Joel before the main story begins? What does the opening sequence teach us about the tone?

Don't just introduce a world but give us an emotional reason to care about that world.

Assignment #2: *he Bear*

Challenge: Creating Conflict Without a Villain

Watch the pilot and track every source of pressure placed on Carmy. Detective

Questions:

- Who wants something from him? What problems existed before he arrived? What problems does he accidentally create? What does Carmy want versus what does he actually need? Why is the kitchen chaos effective instead of confusing? How does the pilot make ordinary situations feel urgent? How do we understand Carmy's personality without a traditional backstory?

Conflict does not require a bad guy. Sometimes the environment is the antagonist.

Assignment #3: *Severance*

Challenge: Creating Mystery Through Questions

Get out your detective notebook. Detective Questions:

- What information did the writers reveal? What information did they deliberately hold back? How much mystery is too much? Why do we keep watching even though we don't understand everything? What clues are hidden in plain sight?

A great mystery gives the audience enough to become curious (BLANK SPACE)

Assignment #4: *Sullivan's Crossing*

Challenge: Creating Emotional Connection Through Character and Place

A character's life is disrupted and forced back into a world they left behind. Detective Questions:

- What does Maggie want at the beginning of the episode? What emotional wounds or unresolved issues does she carry? What does returning to Sullivan's Crossing force her to confront? How does the setting influence the story? How do the writers make us care about Maggie before we fully understand her past? How does the pilot introduce the idea of confronting who you used to be?

DO THIS and you will learn the difference between a **premise** and a **series engine**, which is one of the biggest things aspiring writers struggle with.