**An Exercise in Analyzing and Evaluating Movies**

**Overview:** This exercise is intended to warm you up for the complex task of responding intelligently to films that we’ll see in Ireland. We can all summarize a plot and give an opinion, but analysis and evaluation are harder.

1. [**Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqYtG9BNhfM)(13 min) A Chinese lad in Ireland.
2. [**From Darkness**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0ePFIp_4GQ) (8:37) An Inuit ghost story
3. [**“Riders to the Sea”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWqGk0P6WgI) (5:13) A surfing duel of the sexes
4. [**“Through the Storm”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em-qfw8iRo4)A scary fusion of Irish and Greek myth.

**Content/Structure:** All film reviews two (sometimes all) of these 4 things:

* **summarize** the film’s subject and some of the plot,
* **provide background** about the film’s topic, director, actors, genesis of the project
* **evaluate** the film based on whatever criteria the reviewer judges to be the most relevant to the audience’s expectations and the film’s particular merits or weaknesses.
* **analyze** the film: interpret the meaning of the film, what it is saying/showing about the human condition. In your practice mini-review, you can skip background, but include the others. Aim for at least one handwritten page (if your handwriting is typical), skipping lines and providing reasonable margins.

**Criteria:** Separating the merely personal response from the genuinely arguable judgment can be a great challenge when criticizing a public art form such as a movie. One way to minimize the difficulty is to **be very clear about criteria**. Sometimes the writer has to make a case for particular priorities, maybe the message over the acting, or vice versa. For the purposes of this assignment, let’s consider some fairly standard criteria. In your mini-review, pick at least two of the following to support your judgment of your short film.

* **The story** (plot): Engaging? Interesting structurally? Plausible (if realism is the aim)?
* **Message:** Did it provide food for thought without being overly didactic (preachy)?
* **Complexity/clarity:** Did the film explore a theme in a pleasingly complex way, without being vague? Or did the film develop the themes with a pleasing simplicity without being simplistic (overly simplifying a complex matter)?
* **The acting:** Assuming the aim was a naturalistic style, was the acting convincing? If the style isn’t naturalistic, was it appropriate to the genre and meaning of the film?
* **Visual qualities:** Without getting too technical, did the film *look* good, meaning, did the composition of each frame support the meaning and mood of the story? Did the camera angles, lighting, setting, costume, and special effects (if any) contribute to the overall effect of the story or detract from it? Were there any particular shots that stood out to you?
* **Creativity:** Did the film do anything unusual, such as omit dialogue entirely, or tell the story in voice-over, or withhold a bit of information that changes your view of things dramatically at the end? Do the creative touches support the meaning of the film or were they distracting? Note: creativity might overlap with visual qualities or plot.