

Practice Assignment: *Walter Mitty* Observation Chart

Film Title: <i>The Secret Life of Walter Mitty</i>		Director: Ben Stiller	
Main Characters: Walter Mitty, Ted Hendricks, Cheryl Melhoff, Sean O'Connell			
Topic to Track	Cinematic Technique or Quotation	Time Stamp	Significance in Transformation
Describe the protagonist before transformation. Walter is confined and lonely, yet imaginative.	Read the examples completed for you below. Then, record your own observation for each stage of Walter's transformation.		
	<i>internal framing, in the kitchen, while balancing his cheque book</i>	0:50	<i>The framing of this shot suggests Walter is limited financially.</i>
	<i>high-angle shot</i>	2:50	<i>This shot reveals a dining area that looks more like an office space. Walter does not do a lot of entertaining here. Lonely.</i>
	<i>push-in</i>	4:36	<i>This camera movement indicates Walter is entering his fantasy world. He imagines he is everything Cheryl is looking for in a man. In reality, he demonstrates none of those qualities in his day-to-day life.</i>
Now, you try →			
What situations (people, events, circumstances) cause the protagonist's transformation to begin? <i>The closing of LIFE magazine and the loss of negative 25 cause</i> Walter's transformation to begin.	<i>close up, internal framing of Walter looking through the opening on the negative contact sheet</i>	13:21	<i>The disappearance of negative 25 is the ultimate cause of Walter's transformation, because it initiates his quest to find Sean. The internal framing conveys Walter's focus on finding the missing negative that Sean indicated as "The quintessence of life" (12:24).</i>
	<i>quotation: "That song is about courage and going into the unknown. It's a cool song." (Cheryl)</i>	34:42	<i>Ted refers to Walter as "Major Tom" as a criticism, because Walter is a daydreamer. Cheryl points out that being compared to Major Tom is actually a compliment.</i>
	<i>tracking shot, Walter runs past LIFE cover posters</i>	36:38	<i>Walter has imagined Sean calling to him. The posters are of significant events and great men. The final poster is of Walter dressed as an astronaut, titled "Making of a Brave Man."</i>
Now, you try →			

Topic to Track	Cinematic Technique or Quotation	Time Stamp	Significance in Transformation
Track the protagonist's transformation process. What changes do you see in the protagonist? Throughout Walter's travels around the globe, his self-confidence grows.	<i>push-in</i>	45:13	<i>For the first time, Walter conjures Cheryl to give him the courage to get on the helicopter. Instead of escaping reality, he is using his fantasy to push him into reality.</i>
	<i>Song lyrics: ". . . and I'm floating in the most peculiar way," (flying away in helicopter)</i>	47:27	<i>Mitty has jumped into a helicopter, piloted by a drunk, into a storm in Greenland, chasing the hope he will find Sean. "The Making of a Brave Man" is well underway!</i>
	<i>high-angle, close-up</i>	1:05:30	<i>The high-angle shot of the cheque book reveals that his life has shifted away from the limitations of his past and toward his adventurous future.</i>
Now, you try →			
Describe the protagonist after he or she has transformed. Walter is confident and connected with others.	<i>Match dissolve: "I am alone." The word "alone" remains on the next extreme long shot.</i>	1:21:01	<i>The sherpas have left him, and Walter continues his search for Sean. The match dissolve conveys a sense of time passing and the importance of Walter's solitude.</i>
	<i>back-lighting</i>	1:30:04	<i>With Sean's prompting, Walter joins in a game of soccer in the Himalayas. The back lighting shows them as silhouettes, experiencing the joy of play and friendship we all experience.</i>
	<i>Quotation: "You are so not how I pictured you. I pictured you as a little gray piece of paper. But now I see you, and it's like Indiana Jones decided to become the lead singer of The Strokes. . ."</i>	1:33:38	<i>Todd Maher has witnessed Walter's complete transformation. At first, Walter had no meaningful experience for his eHarmony profile, and in a short time, he has embraced the adventurous life he had wanted for himself when he was younger.</i>
Now, you try →			

Note It Responses

Use this space to record your response to the **Note It** sections, if you wish.