

must be wealthy enough that you don't have to work part-time. Identify three or four other implications that follow from Gladwell's thesis.

The Magic of Moviegoing

Rick Groen

- 1 What movies to watch; with whom to watch; where, when and why to watch. Of course, we got it covered, and so does everyone else. Turn to your favourite newspaper or magazine and, on any given week, these cinematic five Ws will all be lined up and duly addressed. In the arts no less than the news, they're the standard quintet of queries, forming the foundation for most critical commentary. But there's another question, equally interesting, that seldom gets examined or even asked. It's not the What but the How of the matter: how do we behave during this pop rite of going to the picture show?
- 2 Let's confine our little inquiry to theatres proper, and exclude living rooms. Obviously, it's a very different experience viewing a film in the bright confines of your home and through the tiny frame of a TV set. There, we tend to watch more forgivingly, more tolerantly. For every majestic opus, every *Lawrence of Arabia*, that suffers when removed from the big screen, there are a myriad humdrum flicks—tepid thrillers, formula comedies—that actually seem more palatable on the tube. They get better because our expectations get lowered—our investment (of time and money) is just smaller.
- 3 Clearly, the stakes are raised when the setting shifts to a real movie house. So how do we watch there? Well, indulge me for a second while I pick up a popular line of thought about film theatres, the one that insists on a connection between Where and What. This theory suggests that the architecture of the movie theatre is somehow intrinsically linked to the makeup of the movies. Back in the era of the single-screen theatre, the films neatly fit their abodes—a charming Fred Astaire musical felt right at home in an art-deco palace. And now, with the switch from unique local cinemas to multiplex malls, these vast generic structures are attracting the product they deserve—loud look-alike films for loud, look-alike boxes. There, the argument continues, the patrons pick out a movie as they would a channel, and with about as much optimism—18 screens yet nothing to watch.
- 4 I don't think so. Although no fan of the multiplex, I'm leery of such rear-view mirror reasoning, the nostalgic yearning for an illusory past where every screen was silver and every movie golden. Anyway, nostalgia just keeps getting updated. No doubt, a few decades from now, some savage modernist will be tearing down some vintage multiplex, and today's 20-year-olds will be penning tearful odes to the passing of an aesthetic landmark. And they'll be doing so for a good reason. Although where we watch and what we watch have changed radically over time, how we watch has stayed relatively constant. Indeed, for many, the ritual of moviegoing is a large part of the allure, every bit as appealing as the movies themselves.
- 5 That ritual begins at the box office. Movies were invented as a form of mass entertainment, and there's a nicely democratic quality to the very act of entering a theatre. What you buy is a general admission ticket, not an assigned seat, which invariably leads to that through-the-foyer-into-the-aisle scramble for your preferred location—way up front where actors look like giant celluloid idols, mid-range for a less infantilizing perspective, deep in the far reaches for those with extracinematic pursuits in mind.

- 6 Yes, that's part of the ritual. Moviegoing is a social experience. People tend to go in couples or groups. Always, they want to sit together. Too often, they want to talk together. And usually, they want to eat and drink together. In fact, given the wider variety of fare—the hot dogs, the nachos, the pastries—available at the multiplex, "dinner and a movie" has been replaced by "dinner at the movie." (Thanks to the concessions' inflated prices, the hit to the wallet is about the same.) Last, but hardly least, don't forget to add sex to the social equation. A movie is frequently a date; it's foreplay.
- 7 But now the picture starts, and a tension immediately develops between two competing interests—between moviegoing, which is primarily a social experience, and movie-watching, which is essentially an individual experience. A film projected onto a screen in a darkened theatre approximates the state of dreaming, and is intensely personal. So when the lights go down, these duelling impulses—to socialize or to watch, to talk with others or to dream alone—begin to meld. As they do, the theatre becomes simultaneously a public and a private space, with people striving to get the balance right and to keep the boundaries straight.
- 8 We strive for a similar balance inside our automobiles—another hybrid of public and private space. Of course, the car and the motion picture enjoy a shared history. Both came of age through the early part of the last century; both are transporting devices in their separate fashions; and both serve as havens for our sexual desires, either symbolically or otherwise. Inevitably, their twin paths intersected in the steamy atmosphere of the drive-in theatre, a place that typically specialized in showing B-pictures—the kind that weren't too distracting, that prevented the private experience of movie-watching from infringing on the social experience of moviegoing.
- 9 Which brings us to a conclusion less obvious than it might seem at first glance: how we behave at a movie is directly influenced by what we're viewing. The more engrossing the film, the more that moviegoing gives way to movie-watching. We've all observed, even felt this transition—it's almost palpable. Suddenly, popcorn stops being munched, words stop being exchanged, passes stop being made. As we get lost in the movie, we get lost to our companions. But there's a paradox at work here too. This convergence of disparate people turns into an audience, becomes one, only when the various social groupings have disintegrated and its members have splintered off into their private selves. The irony is bald but delicious: when we are most truly alone, we are most truly an audience.
- 10 That's how we watch movies at our best. And, for me, that's the recurring magic of movies, the alchemical wizardry that can break down a buzzing crowd into islands of attentive individuals, then re-assemble those islands into an archipelago of a rapt audience. Funny thing about this wizardry. Disdainful of borders and blind to class, the stuff can pop up anywhere folks gather to find it—at a sprawling multiplex in Dolby surround-sound, or on a white sheet strung between tent poles in the thin open air. The magic may come, or not, but one thing is sure—it's always worth the wait.

Questions for Discussion

1. What stages in the ritual of moviegoing does the author identify? Which paragraphs describe each stage? Have any stages been left out?
2. Paragraphs 7 and 8 are developed by means of comparison. What two things are compared in paragraph 7? In paragraph 8? Did you find these comparisons helpful in understanding Groen's thesis? Why?

3. Identify the elements of the "social experience" (paragraph 6) of going to a movie.
4. According to paragraph 9, what is the connection between people's behaviour at a movie and the movie itself?
5. Analyze the first and last paragraphs of this essay: identify the attention-getter, the statement of thesis, the summary/reinforcement, and the memorable statement.
6. Much of this essay is written in first-person plural: *we* and *us*. How would the effect of the essay change if it was written in the third person (*he, she, they*)? To demonstrate the change, rewrite paragraph 9 in the third person, beginning with the sentence, "How people behave at a movie is directly influenced by what they're viewing." When you've finished your revision, exchange papers with another student. Check your partner's paper for pronoun consistency. Then decide which version (first person or third person) you prefer and why.
7. What, in your own words, is the magic of moviegoing according to Groen?



The Gas-Electric Hybrid Demystified

Sara R. Howerth

- 1 A hybrid is a cross between two established varieties of plant, animal, ... or technology. The hybrid bicycle, for example, combines the features of a road bike with those of an off-road bike to produce a comfortable and efficient bicycle for short-distance cycling. For most people today, the word "hybrid" signifies a fuel-efficient, low-emission automobile. Hybrid car technology combines a gasoline or diesel internal combustion engine with a battery-powered electric motor. Its objective is to maximize the best properties of both the gas engine and the electric motor.
- 2 A gasoline engine is powerful enough for the pickup, torque, and speed any driver requires. Because of the petroleum infrastructure that has developed over the past 100 years, gas-powered vehicles are also easy to refuel and can travel 400 km to 800 km between fill-ups. On the other hand, they are expensive to operate and will become even more so as fuel prices rise. More importantly, they are a major cause of the pollution that contributes to smog, environmental degradation, and global warming.
- 3 Battery-powered electric motors are quiet, efficient, and relatively clean—depending, of course, on how the electricity that charges them is produced. However, they cannot yet travel very far on a charge (some can go 200 km), and most need to be recharged 12 hours or overnight. The technology is evolving rapidly, however, and these limitations of distance and time will probably be significantly reduced in the coming years.
- 4 The hybrid vehicle uses both types of motors and exploits the advantages of each. A gasoline engine provides the power and torque, while an electric engine adds power and thus reduces the amount of gasoline required. There are two types of hybrid vehicle; the difference between them consists of their approach to the twinning of the two engines.
- 5 The "mild hybrid" uses a small electric motor that boosts the capability of the gas engine, thus enabling a smaller gas engine to get the same

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