

These activities guide you through necessary steps for developing a strong thesis statement for the historical film analysis assignment. The assignment asks you to select one of the four stories in *I Am Cuba*, survey the scholarly literature about the film’s production and reception, and critique the film’s communist worldbuilding goals. **Activity 1** structures a close reading of *I Am Cuba*. **Activity 2** asks you to find secondary sources about the film. **Activity 3** structures your thesis statement relating what you’ve learned up to this point to communist worldbuilding.

# Activity 1 - Film Analysis

The below questions guide you through a basic close reading of *I Am Cuba* and ask you to begin engaging with elements of film and media studies analysis.

* What did you know about Cuba before watching the film?
* What particular scenes or moments from the film stand out to you?
* Why might the directors have chosen to produce *I Am Cuba* in black and white?
* Did any technical moments–hard cuts, weird angles, drastic change in sound–stand out to you?
* Which of the four stories did you like the most? Why?
* Which of the four stories did you dislike the most? Why?
* What historical events are depicted in the film?
* What was the message or main idea of *I Am Cuba*?

# Activity 2 - Secondary Research

How do film scholars and historians interpret *I Am Cuba*, its historical context, and its reception?

To help you answer these questions, the sections below list relevant databases to search for literature on *I Am Cuba* and jot down specific sources, with space to take notes. We list three different databases which will likely come up with different results; feel free to use one, two, or all three databases.

1. Academic Search Complete: <http://uclibs.org/PID/126936>

Record the first 3 sources that come up. What are the 3 most important pieces of information from each source?

Source 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/>

Record the first 3 sources that come up. What are the 3 most important pieces of information from each source?

Source 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. UC Library Search: <https://www.lib.uci.edu/>

Record the first 3 sources that come up. What are the 3 most important pieces of information from each source?

Source 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Activity 3 - Crafting a Thesis

Based on what you’ve learned from other people’s experience and analysis of the film, how does *I Am Cuba* create a larger message or goal for its audience? What opinions in the film are expressed about imperialism, social equality, economic development,and counterculture? The fill-in-the-blank structure below provides building blocks to start developing your thesis. Once you have a working thesis, start writing your draft; your thesis will likely change after you’ve written the paper, based on what you learned during the process.

* Scholars and critics reveal that *I Am Cuba*… (what was the reception of the film at the time? what do scholars looking back have to say about it?)
* Given its historical context, the film speaks specifically to… (what were world and local events at that time?)
* *I Am Cuba* critiques… (which larger social movements and politics?)
* The imagined future *I Am Cuba* suggests is…(what does the film hope for? whose lives does it want to see improved?)
* *I Am Cuba*’s worldbuilding project is to... (by showing the film to an audience, what kind of change does the film hope to achieve?)
* The film conveys its message by… (what technical or narrative elements make the film persuasive?)