Generic Conventions of Action Adventure Movies

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| TYPE OF ACTION MOVIE | EXAMPLES | TYPE OF ACTION MOVIE | EXAMPLES |
| **Swashbuckler – period films usually include sword fighting** | *Pirates of the Caribbean; The Mask of Zorro* | **Comic Book/Superhero – films based on characters from comics** | *Batman; Iron Man; X Men* |
| **Disaster – catastrophe that affects lots of people** | *The Day After Tomorrow; 2012* | **Quest – adventure to find something/someone involving danger/peril** | *Indiana Jones; National Treasure* |
| **Fantasy/Science Fiction – set in an imaginary world or in space** | *Harry Potter; Star Trek; Lord of the Rings; Avatar;* | **Thriller – modern day usually involving criminals/terrorists** | *James Bond; Bourne Trilogy, White House Down* |
| **Historical/Epic – based in an historical period – often involves great battles** | *Gladiator; Troy; Robin Hood* |  |  |

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| ***GENERAL CONVENTIONS***  ***spectacle, speed, suspense, combat***   * Spectacle – spectacular stunts; explosions; fight sequences * Action Sequences * Remarkable stunts showing almost impossible actions * Highly choreographed fight sequences/battles | * Graphic displays of injury * Chase sequences * Impressive special and visual effects making the impossible possible * Binary oppositions – good vs evil |

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| ***NARRATIVE***  ***Adventure***   * exciting twists and turns * a race against time * moments of potential peril that the main characters have to come through. * A fight between good and evil with the forces of good triumphant at the end. * Fast moving plots that provide excitement and tension   **Journey/Quest**   * central characters working towards a final goal (such as seeking treasure). * Characters are up against the odds – they have to work in difficult/impossible conditions   **Structure**   * Narrative closure – all problems resolved and the hero triumphant/treasure found/villains defeated | ***SETTING/LOCATION***   * Vast, exotic, glamorous**, f**antastical locations. These can range from desert landscapes to urban settings. * Extreme locations that cause challenges for the central characters – high buildings/mountains, confined spaces * Busy, well-populated locations – potential danger and destruction to everyday people/civilians/building * Characters find themselves battling with the challenges presented by it e.g. surviving earthquakes, struggling through jungles etc. * The evil lair – the place where the bad guy is – often controlling his mooks and keeping an eye on the hero’s progress. |

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| ***CHARACTER***  **Main characters:** All Action Adventure films have a recognisable heroic central character, a hero or heroine who is able to overcome incredible odds. Whilst some films feature brave heroines, most narratives are organised around traditional gender roles (men in charge)  **Oppositional characters:** Action Adventure films tend to feature characters that play opposite the key central character, for example either in the form of a relationship (hero/heroine) or in conflict (villain) | | |
| CHARACTER TYPE (Stereotypical gender) | REPRESENTATION | EXAMPLE |
| Hero/Protagonist (M) | Usually a man – often American; muscular, good at fighting; clever and quick witted (can outfox the villain); physically attractive – attracts women | Thor |
| Villain/Bad Guy/Antagonist (M) | Supreme baddie – selfish and evil – they want the hero dead. In control for most of the film until the end when he’s defeated by the hero | Voldemort; |
| Damsel in Distress (F) | A woman that needs rescuing by a man. They often become the love interest for the hero. Often the Damsel in Distress becomes an Action Girl | Mary Jane Watson (Spiderman) |
| Action Girl (F) | – subverts the stereotype of the Damsel in Distress – can fight her own battles – often adopts male qualities – physique/dialogue/use of weapons. Action Girls can start the film as Damsels in Distress | Lara Croft |
| Action Survivor (M/F) | A character who gets caught up in an adventure but is not equipped to deal with it | Matthew in Die Hard 4.0 |
| Anti-Hero (M) | main hero who is not entirely good – has a troubled past – can be selfish | Riddick (Vin Diesel) |
| Mook (M) | A dispensible bad guy – the hero kills/injures lots of them | Usually unnamed characters |
| Action Duo/Sidekick | Manly Man paired with a sensitive guy – often the Action Survivor; the sidekick is often the more intelligent character who can use knowledge and skill (often technical) to get the hero out of trouble | Capt Kirk + Spock |
| Hero Team | A group of characters with differing personalities who work together to solve problems/defeat the bad guy. Often one or more of these characters dies before the end of the movie. The Action Hero is usually in charge. | Avengers |
| The Maverick | The character who goes against the rest of the team and is a bit of an outsider – too aggressive; untrustworthy. He usually comes good at the end. |  |

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| CAMERA/EDITING/SPECIAL EFFECTS   * Fast editing * Slow motion * Undercranking (time speeded up) * Aerial shots * Bullet time (incredible slow motion) * Whip pans * Establishing shots, extreme high angle and low angle shots to show scale * Steadicam * Use of CGI |

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| SOUND/LIGHTING   * Epic sweeping orchestral soundtracks to fit with spectacle * Fast tempo dramatic music to accompany chase scenes * Enhanced foley sound effects to increase the sense of spectacle (Foley sound is natural sound effects added in post production – punches, footsteps, gunshots etc) * Off screen noises to add tension * Short snappy dialogue – action is more important than words * Ambient lighting   + Colour filters – red – danger/blue – cold   + High key – extreme shadows |

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| MISE EN SCENE   * Weapons * Vehicles used for chase or combat * Costumes relating to character and action – black/leather/uniform/utility belts/boots/masks * Gadgets |

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| NOTES |