

Nova: Alien Planets Revealed

1. Who made this film? What do I need to know about the filmmaker(s) to analyze this film?
Paula Apsell. You do not need to know the filmmaker specifically, as much as the group “NOVA” that produced the documentary. Even then, you only need to know their usual type of content, which is centered around science and technology.

2. What central questions is the film trying to answer? What does the filmmaker want people to know or remember? Who is the target audience?
The film is trying to answer the question of “Are We Alone?” and “Are there other planets that could possibly be inhabited by some form of life?” The filmmaker wants people to know more about the existence of other planets and solar systems, their prevalence, and the technological advancements that have had to come about for this goal to be possible. The filmmaker also wants to install at least a cursory understanding of astrological bodies. The target audience is those who are interested in astronomy and the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

3. Who funded this film and what is his or her interest in this particular approach to the film’s main topic(s)?
The Corporation of Public Broadcasting, PBS viewers, and the WGBH Educational Foundation. I can only assume that the reason all of these groups fund this is because of their interest in science and educational programming.

4. Who might benefit from the messages in this film? Who might be harmed or disadvantaged by them? What have I learned from this film? Why might the film’s message(s) matter to me?
I think everyone could benefit by watching this, or related programs, because scientific literacy and curiosity can only benefit people. The only people who would be disadvantaged are the harmfully religious. I learned about the Kepler telescope and how it searched for exo-planets, and the techniques used to do this, as well as potential types of life that could exist elsewhere. The film’s message matters because I have always maintained a scientific curiosity and an interest in astronomy.

5. What kinds of actions might I take in response to this film?
The actions I might take would be further research into the topic, if for no other reason than to satiate my curiosity. Other actions could include attempting to follow this type of science as a career if I was younger and not invested in a different Major already.

6. What is this film about (and what makes you think that)? What ideas, values and information are overt? Implied? Who are the voices of authority in this film? Are there voices left out that would add important perspectives?
This film is about Astronomy, and the search for life sustaining planets. I think that because it is the topic of the documentary. The ideas, values, and information that are overt are scientific theories and hypotheses and the techniques used to explore them. The information that is implied is that we should be doing this exploratory work. The voices of authority are the scientists involved in this topic. Besides inviting more experts to speak, there aren’t any left out voices that could add more to this niche topic.

7. What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate essential ideas? How do those techniques communicate the intended message(s)?

The filmmaker uses a lot of metaphors and special fx to illustrate more complex ideas about the topic. This works because it creates a visual reference as well as a simple metaphor to follow if one can't quite grasp the topic.

8. How might others see this film in a way that differs from the way I see it?

How and why might different types of people interpret this film in divergent ways? What is my reaction to this film and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?

People without more than a cursory knowledge of astronomy may not find this as interesting due to complex concepts, or perhaps a general lack of interest. Besides plain disinterest I can't imagine people being very divergent on this documentary, especially since its scientific material and not based on opinion or controversy. My reaction is deep interest and a desire for research to progress so I can learn more, and from this I gain the knowledge that I quite enjoy astronomy and the prospect of habitable exoplanets.

9. When was this film made? Since then, has anything occurred that is relevant to the claims or focus of the film? Where or how has this film been distributed (shared with the public)?

This film was made in January of 2014, and since then there has not been too much more knowledge gained on the topic, though new exoplanets have come up in scientific news here and there. This film was distributed via public broadcast.

10. Which of the film's assertions are facts and which are opinions? What sources does the film rely on for its information, ideas or assertions? Are those sources credible? How do you know?

The only assertion made that is an opinion is that it is worth exploring this topic, the rest is fact. This film relies on scientific research made by experts in and proponents of this particular field of study. These sources are credible because the information comes from actual researchers that you can look up if you are unsure of their accreditation.