

## Western Movies Conventions

### Key Points

- Telling stories set in the American West
- Often portray films in a romanticized light
- Nostalgic, historical feel
- Genre has been popular throughout the history of the movies
- Has diminished in importance as the United States moves further away from the period depicted in these movies.

### Setting and Time

- Set in the American West
- Almost always in the 19th Century
- Incorporate the Civil War into the film directly, or the background
- May extend further back to the colonial period, or forward to the mid 20th century
- May range geographically from Mexico to Canada

### The Hero

- Semi – nomadic characters
- Sole possessions consist of clothing, a gun and maybe a horse
- Some high technology of the era present, e.g. telegraph, printing press, railroad
- Occasionally these referred to as a development just arriving, symbolizing the end of frontier lifestyle and the march of civilization

### Some general conventions

- Each movie is a morality tale
- Usually set against stunning American landscapes
- In some movies the landscapes are more the stars than the actors
- Stress the harshness of the landscape, or juxtapose the beauty of it with the dirtiness of a town

### **Some possible locations**

- Isolated forts
- Ranch houses
- Isolated homestead
- Saloon
- Jail

### **Iconography**

- Stetsons
- Spurs
- Colt. 45's
- Prostitutes
- Saloon
- Sheriff
- Faithful Steed
- Indians

### **Common themes**

- Conquest of the wilderness and the subordination of nature, or the capture of territory from the natives.
- Depicts a society based on a code of honor rather than law.
- Social status is only achieved through acts of violence or generosity.
- The arrival of the law is often seen as regrettable.