Film Close Reading

The purpose of this analytical paper is to explore the ways in which a short scene can function within a larger filmic whole. It is an opportunity for you to not only practice close reading, but further, to use your close reading skills in the service of an argument that extends beyond a mere clip. In other words, your close reading is meant to serve as evidence of some larger point. The precise point in question, however, is up to you. Instructions: Watch the two relatively lengthy clips below. Choose one of the clips, and write a paper exploring how the sequence furthers/manifests the key themes/aims of the film whence it comes. N.B.: You do not need to address your chosen clip in its entirety. Formatting Requirements: Your paper must be two-pages long, doubled-spaced, with one-inch margins. Be sure to use a black, twelve-point font. Tips: Write about the sequence/film in the present tense. Focus on something that you yourself find interesting and engaging. If you’re invested in your subject matter, your paper will be easier to write and your reader (i.e. me) will be more invested in it as well. Try to focus on a problem or a puzzle, something that’s not self-evident, something that requires effort/insight to unravel. Your argument shouldn’t be obvious; it should be debatable but convincing. Try not to overstate your case, however. Stick to things you can prove. You don't need to make an argument about all cinema everywhere. It’s okay––preferable, in fact––to simply focus on one individual clip. Avoid making broad generalizations; they will only bring you trouble. Summarize the clip only insofar as it helps you make your argument. There’s no need to rehash irrelevant information. Always remember that you are writing for someone else. You may know what you’re trying to say, but will it be clear to your reader? Try reading your paper out loud to yourself. Does it make sense? Does it “flow”? A little editing goes a long way. Typos, spelling errors, and factual mistakes are easily fixed, but they have a disproportionately large impact when left unaddressed. They can be the difference between enchanting and angering your reader.