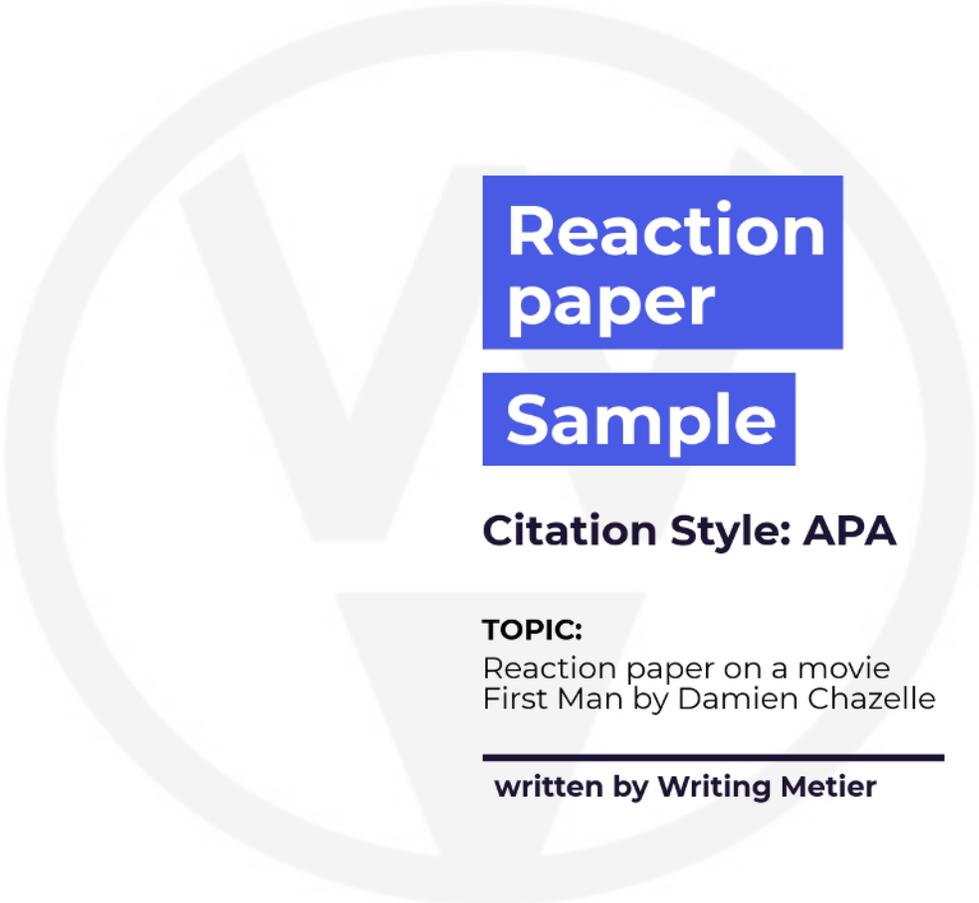


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## Reaction Paper

## First Man by Damien Chazelle

Critically-acclaimed director of *Whiplash* and *La La Land*, Damien Chazelle is one of great ambition. When it is the matter of making a movie about the first man to ever walk on the moon, you cannot scale a movie. The fourth feature of Chazelle called *First Man* is a movie based on Neil Armstrong, who was the ultimate NASA hero of all of 20<sup>th</sup> century. When Neil Armstrong took his first step on the moon in 1969, people all over the world were captivated. However, in the years that followed, Neil Armstrong took his silent leave from the public eye. In the year 2005, James R. Hanson wrote a book about Neil Armstrong, during which time Neil Armstrong was leading a quiet suburban life.

Armstrong passed away in 2012, and we really cannot fathom what he would say if he ever got a chance to watch the *First Man* from Chazelle's point of view and Josh Singer's screenwriting. After watching the movie, *First Man* seems like a respectful movie where Damien Chazelle never gives the viewer a single moment to think that Armstrong isn't doing important work. However, it feels that in some moment, that was precisely the problem. The movie *First Man* seems too focused on the fact that Neil was a low-key hero. The character of Neil Armstrong is played by Ryan Gosling who delivers a sensitive performance, which is a bit too sensitive for the role he is supposed to be playing. One thing that does give the movie a very real effect is the hand-held camera work, which shows the viewers just how nerve wracking it can be for

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a man who is about to go to the moon, being the first one ever to do it too. However, most people felt that it was a bit inconsequential as no big-events were happening during the scenes shot by hand-held camera that would have required such a technique on the cameraman's part.

First Man has much over on the spirit of Phillip Kaufman's 1983 Tom Wolfe *The Right Stuff* which was based on original Mercury astronauts, that came much prior to Neil Armstrong. These astronauts flew both the Gemini and Apollo missions. This movie focused heavily on the cheerful casualness in the face of imminent danger, however, Damien Chazelle focused more on taking a gloomier path with his Neil Armstrong adaptation, and his instincts somewhat paid off. The Gemini astronauts took a long time on the Apollo missions and forever to reach the moon, and many men died trying to get there. Chazelle makes his viewers feel the weight of such loss (Chazelle, 2018).

Specific scenes that were noteworthy in the movie were the first lunar landing, a mission that was accompanied by Neil Armstrong, Mike Collins and Buzz Aldrin which was highly tense. Other scenes included the pre-launch test for Apollo one. Gosling gave a good performance overall and understood the gravity of playing such an auspicious role, which is a once in a lifetime opportunity. The movie really stands out from other works of Damien Chazelle.

## References

Chazelle, D. (2018). *First Man* [DVD]. Germany.