

Student Name _____ *Date Submitted* _____

DRAMA: FILM AND TV 12 (v2)

Section 1.0 Send-In: *The Grammar of Filmmaking*

Complete this send-in as part of your course enrollment. This will be your first mark entered for the course. When this assignment has been received by SCIDES, your course materials will be sent to you.

This send-in consists of:

- DF&TV 12 Course Planner _____/13 marks
- Activity 1.1A 1 _____/3 marks
- Activity 1.1A 2 _____/10 marks

TOTAL: _____/26 marks _____%



Mail:

- 1) This **Cover Sheet**
- 2) **Return Address** (page 2 or Comment Sheet) – Fill out with your complete name and address.
- 3) **Send-In Assignments** – Completed Part A and Part B assignments.

*Be sure to put proper **postage** on the envelope (if necessary) and add your **return address**.*

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Is this a change of address?

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SEND-IN ACTIVITY

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Name: _____

___ / 5 marks

DRAMA: FILM AND TELEVISION 12 Course Planner

Complete all the following contact information that applies to you and check the one that is the best way to contact you during the day:

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

other way to contact you (explain) _____

When is the best time for your teacher or tutor/marker to contact you? ___:___ AM PM

Check your Grade: Grade 10 Grade 11 Grade 12 Graduated

Timetable Options/Course Plan

One of the keys to being successful in anything that you do is to take the time to plan carefully. The objective of this section is to help you create a timetable for managing your schoolwork and enable you to set goals for finishing all of your courses by your desired completion date. **Most full-time students complete 3 to 5 assignments each week.**

The flexibility of our distributed learning program offers you many choices but a plan for completion is essential to success. Most full-time students complete 8 courses in a school year (10 months). The most common timetables are "semestered" (4 courses at a time) or "linear" (8 courses at a time).

What is your planned schedule? Semester System (22 weeks) Linear System (44 weeks)

other: *(explain)* _____

What is your intended **start** date for this course? Now Other date: _____

What is your intended **completion** date for this course? _____ (month) _____ (year)

How many courses are you taking with us this year? _____ How many with other schools/programs? _____

Drama: Film and TV 12 consists of 13 more send-in assignments and no module tests. How many assignments/tests per week must you do to complete this course as planned? _____



- *Mark target submission dates on a calendar.*
- *Add this same information from other courses to help you create a schedule for completion.*
- *Record the actual dates you submit work so you can track your progress.*



Delivery Method

Drama: Film & TV 12 is offered as an online-supported print course. You will receive workbooks in print form and you have the option of also accessing the online support for the course. If you sign up for the Drama: Film & TV 12 online classroom, you may still choose to do assignments on paper and send in by regular mail.

In the online classroom, you will find:

- assignments uploaded as templates in Word. You email in the completed assignments as attachments.
- tips & pointers for doing the course including comments from the marker/tutor and links out to websites that clarify the concepts
- access to other learners and your marker/tutor

Benefits to the online classroom:

- word-processing ability on assignments
- clarification of concepts and/or assignment instructions
- quicker turn-around time for marked assignments
- improved/corrected assignments (the uploaded assignments may differ from the print versions)
- participation is completely optional even once you have access



Would you like access to the online classroom for COURSE NAME?

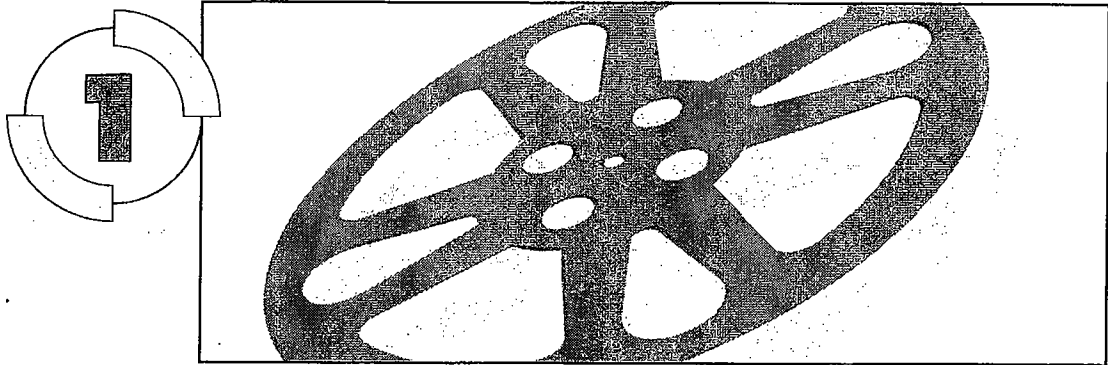
YES

NO THANKS

Anything else?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your education plans that will help us provide you with better service?

OVERVIEW FOR MODULE 1



In Module 1 of *Drama: History of Film 12* you will examine the basic grammar of filmmaking, narrative structure in movies, and the business of film production. You will watch George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) and examine the roles of shot selection, editing, scenes and *mise en scène*, sound, lighting, characters, and stars in movies. You will also look at the roles of narrative structure, genre, and myth in film, and you will assess the Hollywood film industry as a business.

Materials for Module 1

In order to complete this module successfully you will need:

- the textbook *Understanding Movies* (Giannetti and Leach, 1998)
- *Module 1 Source File*
- *Star Wars* on videotape (*Star Wars* is currently not available from your school. You'll need to borrow a copy of the movie from a video rental outlet or perhaps from a friend.)
- an exercise book or notebook
- a television set
- a video cassette recorder/player (VCR)

Section 1.1

The Grammar of Filmmaking, Part I

By the end of this section, you will be better able to:

- analyze how the artistic components of film and television affect meaning
- use appropriate vocabulary when discussing or producing film and television
- analyze how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence and are influenced by film and television images and messages
- describe the organizational structure of a film crew, including production staff and actors
- compare how artistic components in film and television are constructed for specific audiences and purposes in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts

Overview

In Section 1.1 you will learn about the basic grammar (techniques) filmmakers use in making feature-length motion pictures. You will watch *Star Wars* and then examine the elements in the development of a story, including shot selection, editing, and *mise en scène*.

Lesson 1.1A

The Shot

Film is the most popular art form of the twentieth century, largely because it has the power, like no other medium, to move audiences from the mundane world of comfortable seats in local theatres to other universes existing beyond personal experience. Other art forms can greatly affect audiences, but none with the magnitude and intensity possible with film. We all have favourite movies, memorable for a variety of reasons. However, in general, the beauty and power of movies lie in the ability of filmmakers to develop and exploit the basic ingredients or visual language central to cinema itself.

Movies are visual storytelling—a kind of storytelling that uses a language of images, sounds, movement, and actors. Used well, these elements bring stories alive and, as the final credits roll across the screen, leave us breathless with wonderment, excitement, and passion.

By the end of this lesson, you will be better able to:

- define and clarify the role of the different kinds of shots in a film scene
- outline how each shot creates different effects for audiences
- define the role of a storyboard in making a successful film
- identify reasons for Star Wars' box office success
- identify outstanding special effects in Star Wars
- assess how special effects in Star Wars contribute to its overall impact
- compare your response to Star Wars with that of an older friend or family member

Star Wars

In this module of *Drama: History of Film 12* we will be exploring one of the most popular and successful movies in Hollywood history, George Lucas's 1977 epic, *Star Wars*.

Film Exploration

Things to consider before watching the movie:

1. Probably, you have seen at least one episode in George Lucas' *Star Wars* saga (which includes: *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* [Irvin Kershner, 1980], *The Return of the Jedi* [Richard Marquand, 1983], and *The Phantom Menace* [George Lucas, 1999]). But it was the original film, released in 1977, which forever changed how movies are made. While Lucas and his team painstakingly worked on the production throughout the mid-1970s, film studios had low expectations for a science fiction film that drew its inspiration from 1930s comic books and was targeted at teenagers. Today, special effects-laden science fiction movies targeted at a teenage audience are the bread and butter of the American film industry. But in 1977, this wasn't the case. *Star Wars* made it so, and it's only one of many parts of the film industry that this film changed forever.
2. Why has *Star Wars* been such a success?

It's sometimes difficult to say why one film works for audiences and others don't. In the case of *Star Wars*, however, there are a number of elements in the film which point to its success.

- The story is pure comic book fantasy, filled with heroes, princesses, arch villains, cuddly creatures and father figures who offer the voice of wisdom.
- The film takes place in an imaginary world that seems just close enough to our own to be believed
- Even by today's standards, the special effects are often brilliant, always believable and never boring.

In the rest of the course, you'll look at a number of elements in *Star Wars* and discuss how they contribute to the success and long-term impact of the film. For now, watch the video. Then do the discussion activity that follows.

Activity 1.1A 1: [3 marks]

Discuss with family, friends, or other students in your class the following questions.

Write down a summary of your findings to each question.

1. Why do you think *Star Wars* was such a success when it was released in 1977. What about this film is memorable to you?
2. Although the special effects in *Star Wars* are dated by today's standards, they don't look out of place (like the special effects in old *Star Trek* movies, for instance). Which special effects stand out for you the most and assess how they contribute to the overall impact of the film.
3. Speak with an older friend or member of your family who remembers seeing *Star Wars* when the film was first released in cinemas. How did this person react to the film when it first appeared on screens? Was their response different than your own? If so, how?

The Magic of *Star Wars*

Not only has *Star Wars* become one of the most recognizable stories in the history of moving pictures, it has set the stage for a whole new kind of Hollywood film. George Lucas's science fiction epic has drawn generations of moviegoers into a universe that existed "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away." This is no small feat. The rebel forces and the Empire are neither part of our world nor our time. In another way, however, they are. As we watch Luke, Princess Leia, Han Solo, and Darth Vader move across the screen, their world becomes part of our world, and our world becomes intimately tied to their adventures. This is exactly the point; a great film lets us enter the magical kingdom of our heroes, villains, and friends as though we are living through the adventure with them. What allows us to enter this world is the skilful manipulation of cinema's visual language. The most basic and essential element of this visual language is the film shot, the starting point from which the entire structure of a movie is built.

Types of Shots

Textbook Exploration

Read the text selection for this lesson (*Understanding Movies* – pages 10–16) for an overview of the key shots filmmakers use in movies. Not all of the material in this section will be of use to you at this point; however, the authors provide helpful and detailed descriptions of different kinds of shots and the purposes they serve in crafting the visual language of film.

For our purposes, the role of the *long shot* or *establishing shot*, the *medium shot*, the *close-up*, and the *extreme close-up* will be important in our first critical look at *Star Wars*. As a rule, different shots are determined by the positioning of the human figure. For instance:

A long shot—is roughly the same distance as that which separates an audience from a theatre stage. It includes the full human figure and often provides a clear view of the environment or setting in which we find a character. The largest versions of these shots are called *extreme long shots*. These are quite often landscape shots or shots that give a view of a whole world (a city, a town, or even a galaxy) where the story is set. Both extreme long shots and long shots can also act as *establishing shots* and *re-establishing shots*, which are the opening and closing shots in a scene. In all cases, long shots help to provide a sense of location and setting for our story.

A medium shot—shows the human body from the ankles or knees up and is generally used to show interaction between characters, including dialogue, or to show movement (i.e., the movement of cars on the street).

A close-up—focuses in on the human face and is generally shot from the mid-torso up. It is used to create intimacy or to show emotional responses from characters. A close-up can also be used to focus on an object as a way of highlighting the importance of that object in the story.

An extreme close-up—is a variation on the close-up and is quite often used to highlight a particular body part such as an eye, a hand, or a mouth.

Ordering Shots

On their own, individual shots remain important. However, as we know from watching movies, it is the sequence or ordering of shots that literally creates movement and brings a story to life on the screen. Editing is the process in which individual shots are “knit” together in a particular sequence. It is important to note that the shots described previously are often linked together in a particular order. To craft an effective scene in a movie, the filmmaker orders the shots in roughly the same way sentences are used to craft a paragraph.

In a paragraph, as in a film scene, we begin with an introductory statement. In a paragraph this statement is called the topic sentence; in a movie it is the long or establishing shot. In a paragraph we then move to explanatory sentences that fill in the ideas that are being conveyed and finally to the concluding sentence that brings the paragraph to a close. Likewise, in a film, the establishing shot often leads to a series of medium shots, close-ups, and extreme close-ups that reveal the scene’s actions or events. At the close of the scene a long shot is used again to act as a kind of punctuation mark to tell viewers that the scene is now complete. Needless to say, filmmakers play with this sequence of shots all the time.

Source File Exploration

The opening shots in a film are essential for quickly introducing the film’s story to an audience. They establish where the film is set and may also introduce the mood and the key characters. For more information on opening shots, go to your Module 1 Source File and read “*Film Concepts: Language*”. Pay particular attention to the section entitled “Getting Involved in a Film—The Opening Sequence.”

Storyboard

Prior to making a film, storyboarding a film production is essential to ensure the quality of the picture. A storyboard is like a comic strip. It is a way of visualizing shots and the sequence of shots by sketching out images before a production begins. Usually, elements like set design, camera angles, types of shots, and the proper sequence of shots are laid out in the storyboard. It can't be underestimated how important storyboarding is to the success of a film. Storyboarding provides a visual template the filmmaker can refer to during the shooting and editing of a movie. A storyboard does not have to be produced by an artist. It simply has to indicate what is happening in a given shot. Following is an example of a storyboard for part of the scene in *Star Wars* where Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi confront each other on the Death Star.

Example

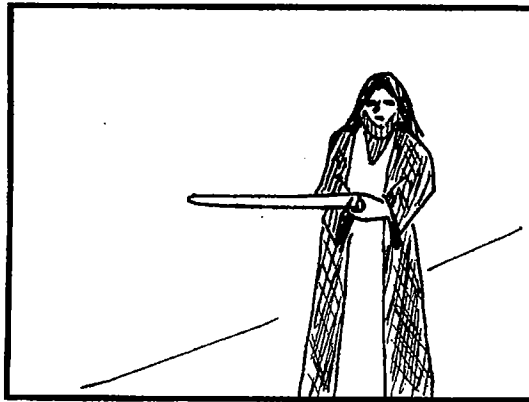
Storyboard (on following page)



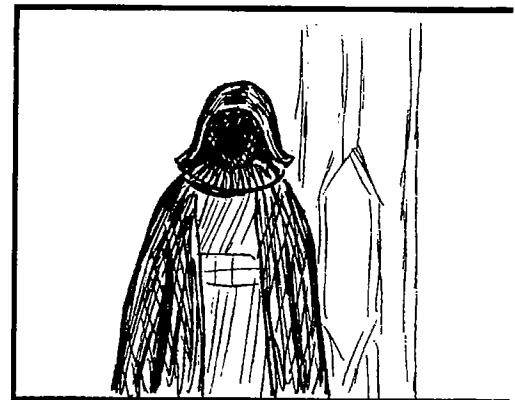
Obi-Wan Kenobi stops as he spies Darth Vader. (Medium shot)



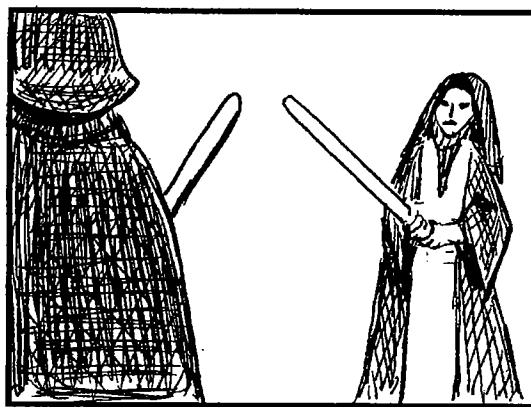
Darth Vader pauses in the hallway as he walks toward Obi-Wan Kenobi. (Long shot, then moves to medium shot)



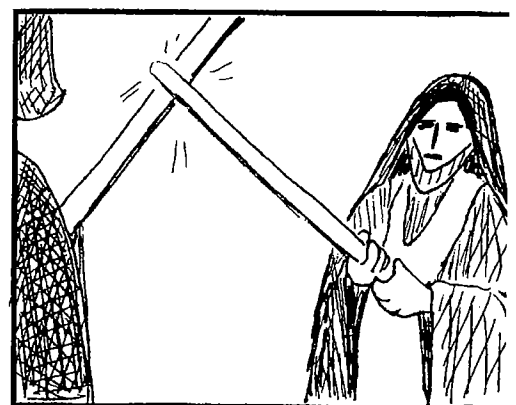
Obi-Wan Kenobi, activates his light saber. (Medium shot)



Darth Vader greets Obi-Wan Kenobi. (Medium shot)



Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi raise their light sabers as they verbally spar. (Medium shot in profile)



The battle between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi begins as their light sabers clash. (Medium shot in profile)

Activity

For more information on the use of storyboards in the film industry, visit the website, *Acting with a Pencil - Storyboarding your Movie*. (<http://www.exposure.co.uk/eejit/storybd/index.html>)

Activity 1.1A 2: [10 marks]

- [2 marks] 1. In two or three sentences, define the role of a storyboard in making a successful film.
2. Watch the opening scene in *Star Wars* again, from the shot where we see Princess Leia's ship being chased by the Imperial battle cruiser to the capture of Princess Leia. The clip begins at approximately 15:15.
- [8 marks] 3. From this clip **choose** an example of each of the following shots:
- A long shot
 - A medium shot
 - A close-up shot
 - An extreme close-up shot

Draw a picture of each shot in as much or as little detail as you wish.

Below each drawing, **explain** the purpose of the shot by describing what it tells us about the storyline and the relationship between the Empire and the forces of the Rebellion.

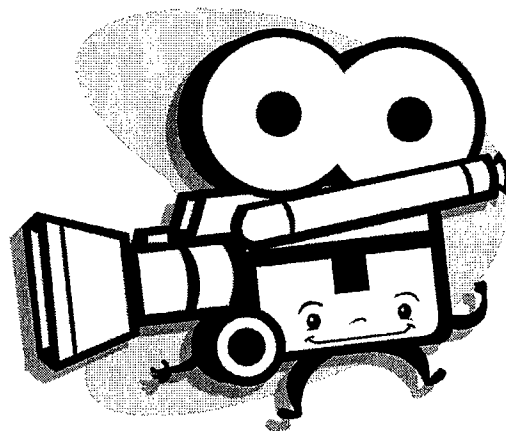
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DRAMA: FILM AND TV 12 (v2)

Section Assignment #1.0 *Resource Pages*

Attached are the pages from the Drama: Film and TV 12 Resources that you need to complete this Section 1.0 Send-In Assignment.



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L A N G U A G E

Why are some films 'better' than others?

Have you ever been to the cinema or watched a video and been disappointed by the film? Of course you have. But why? It's very rare for anyone to sit down to watch a film without knowing something about it. So you knew what the story was about; there were recognisable 'stars' and yet it didn't 'work' for you. Why is that? How can we say that a film is 'good' or 'bad'? What do we use to judge it as such? Why is it that something that 'works' for one person does not 'work' for another?

It's because each one of us reacts individually to a film, just as we do with a book, or a painting, or a piece of music. You may read two books with the same storyline and similar characters but prefer one to the other. Why? Because you interact with it - it's all part of the experience. That's why it's often more satisfying to watch a film with other people than on your own, because you share the interaction at the same time. This is why, technical reasons apart, seeing a film at the cinema can be such a satisfying experience.

GETTING INVOLVED IN A FILM - THE OPENING SEQUENCE

From the moment we first start watching the film we begin to get involved. The first few images of a film (the opening sequence) are very important to us as they give us lots of clues as to what the film will be about. We look at the opening shots of place and time, and put them in context. We look at the actors we are presented with and make assumptions about their characters and roles in the film and their relationship to each other. We look at the title of the film - the way it is worded and the style of the lettering and we try to guess what genre (type) of film it will be. We listen to the sound, which is often predominantly music at this stage, and the tone and beat of this again give us further clues as to how the film will develop. We do all this automatically - at this time we are extremely receptive and actively involved.

Without realising it, we have entered into the world of the film and begun to read the signs that have been set up for us; we have begun to **decode** the **film language**.

FILM CODES AND SIGNALS

In the spoken or written language that we use, words often have hidden meaning, or a 'signal' behind the literal meaning of the word. For instance, the sun is literally a yellowish ball in the sky, but the word 'signals' to us meanings such as warmth, cheerfulness, life, etc. A teddy bear is a stuffed, brown plaything but it 'signals' comfort and childhood innocence to us. These are known as the **denotative** (literal) meaning and the **connotative** (hidden signals and implications) meaning of the word.

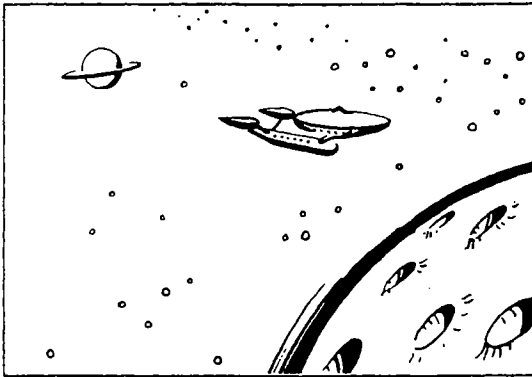
Films use the same signals or coding systems. For instance if we see a picture of a wooden thing with branches on screen, our mind thinks 'tree'. If the tree is a gnarled, large, spiky and leafless image, shot in black and white, we read the signal of disaster, threat, maybe horror. If the tree is drawn in bright crayon colours and is rounded and 'lollipop'-like, it signals 'children', 'happy birdies nesting', etc, to us.

The codes films use do not only have to be visual. The use of sudden loud music signals 'something dramatic is about to happen - pay attention!'. An extreme close-up shot of a person's face signals 'this character's reaction is very important'. The study of these systems of signs is called **semiology**.

Most film audiences are able to recognise these film codes; even young children are aware of the basics. As students of film you will learn how to analyse this film language in more detail. Your level of interaction will be greater and you will be able to be more specific about what it is that makes a film 'good' or 'bad'.

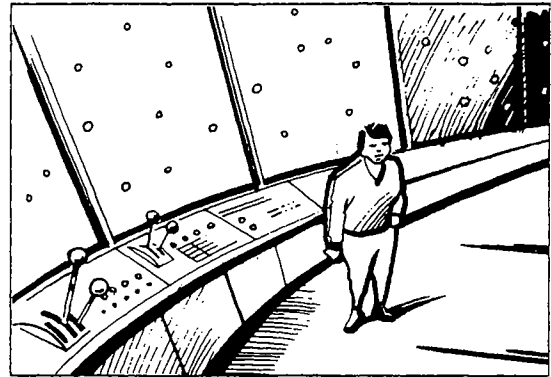
Let's look at some of the elements which make up a film and through which the signals are sent to us. These are the basic criteria through which we can make judgments about a film.

1 **Different types of shot** are used in combination to give you information about where and when something is happening, the role of a character and his/her reaction, to draw attention to someone or something, or to create an impression or feeling. Look at the examples below



LONG SHOT (LS)

Used to establish where action will take place, e.g. in space; and a long way away from anywhere.



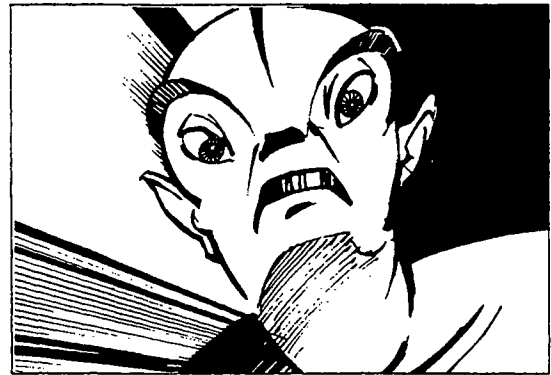
HIGH ANGLE SHOT

Used to create feeling that character is vulnerable. (Camera is tilted downwards on its axis).



MEDIUM SHOT (MS)

To show background and also appearance of characters.



LOW ANGLE SHOT

To create feeling of power. Also a point of view shot (P.O.V. shot) on the part of the threatened character. (Camera is tilted upwards on its axis).



CLOSE-UP (CU)

To show reaction of characters.



BIG CLOSE-UP (BCU)

Extreme close-up of monster's eye creates a feeling of unease as we don't know what else is happening around it. Such a close-up is 'unnatural' to us and therefore distorts the image in our minds.

There are many variations and combinations of these shots.

- 2 **Different camera movements** can be used to create a specific effect, for example:
- * a character walks into a room and camera slowly **pans** across (moves from side to side). We feel as if we are the character looking around. By stopping on something, our attention can be focused on this;
 - * a feeling of unsteadiness or unease can be created by moving the camera diagonally (**rolling**). Our brains register that all is not well within this screen world;
 - * the camera pulling backwards from a scene (**tracking**) indicates to the audience that the action that concerns us has now finished. In suspense films the action may start suddenly again at this point, thus surprising or shocking our expectations.
- 3 **Mise-en-Scène** This is a French term meaning 'what is put into the scene' or frame. It is the director's job to decide this and what is put in or left out can make a big difference to the signals we receive and the way we decode them.

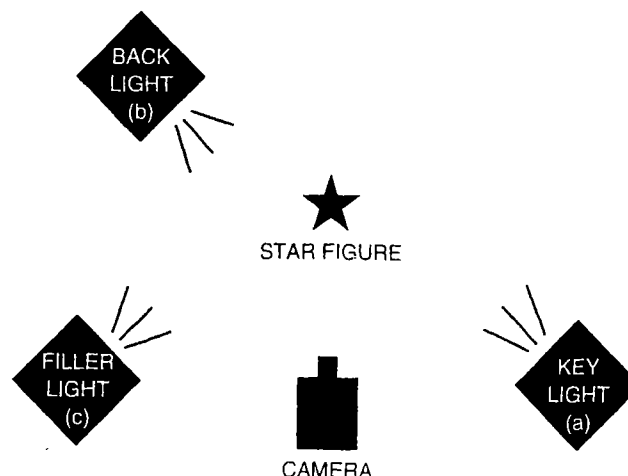
If a director wants to show that the story takes place in Victorian times, he or she will signal this by the use of period clothes and props. The specific inclusion of a bed and rocking horse will signify a nursery. He may take this one step further and include a window with a storm outside, thus creating atmosphere. He may sit a child on a low stool in the middle of the floor, her toys lined up formally along the walls, thus signalling that she is isolated and repressed by this room and the society she lives in. So the selection of specific objects and images carry broader ideas.

Like the words chosen to make up a poem, each item in a frame may be carefully chosen and positioned. The director can draw our attention to an object, a gun, say, by placing it in the foreground, near the camera lens. We then decode that the gun will be important in this scene.

One director who emphasized the importance of mise-en-scène was André Bazin, who believed that it encouraged audiences to become more involved in a scene since they had to look actively and interpret what was included.

USE OF LIGHTING

Lighting is an important signifier as it conveys the mood or atmosphere of the scene which we are observing. In a studio, the lighting is usually from three sources and is set up as follows:



- (a) The **key light**, as the name suggests, is usually the brightest and most influential.
 - (b) The **back light** helps counteract the effect of the key light, thus making the figure look more 'rounded'.
 - (c) The **filler light** helps to soften the harsh shadows that the use of back and key lights creates.
- There may be more than one of these.

The director manipulates this basic format to achieve the atmosphere he wishes to signify. For instance, if he uses only the key and back lights, he will produce a sharp contrast of dark and light areas on the screen as shadows are formed. This is known as **low-key lighting**. These shadows can be decoded by the audience to suggest an air of mystery, as used in the 'film noir' (dark films) of the 1940's and 1950's. They can also be decoded to suggest a world where there is depression and decay, as we find in many modern-day films depicting life in the future. Exaggerated use of low-key lighting can be found in horror films, where underlighting (placing a light under a face or object) gives a dramatic, often distorting effect. Low-key lighting is often seen as expressive. **High-key lighting** means that filler lights are used. This will appear much more normal and realistic to our eyes but can also be manipulated to give a more glamorous appearance to a star's face, or add a 'twinkle' to their eyes. It is much 'softer' than low-key lighting.

USE OF SOUND

The use of music in a film, like the use of lighting, works directly on the audience at a very emotional level. Even before 'talkies' were produced in the late 1920's, music was used to accompany film, the source often being a sole pianist or organist sitting at the side of the screen. The type of music used (the rhythm and the tone) is an instant creator of atmosphere and mood. By using synthesized electronics a 'future world' can be evoked; by using screeching, high-pitched violins we can be put 'on edge'. Theme songs often indicate directly what the more subtle film language is trying to signal to us.

We accept the use of music as one of the conventions of the film world. We are not surprised when it comes in as the lovers kiss, or as the cars chase through the streets - we understand it is used here as a highlighting or passing-of-time device. Music, and indeed other sound heard in a film, the source of which does not appear on screen, is known as **nondiegetic** sound.

Sound which comes from objects or people on screen is called **diegetic** sound. This will include characters talking, a phone ringing, their footsteps, etc. This appears so normal to us that it is only if the sound track is slightly out of synchronisation that we even notice it is there. Furthermore, we easily accept the 'normality' of *hearing* a character's thoughts on film - this is just another convention of film that we are used to.

USE OF EDITING

When the filming has been completed, the editing process begins. This is a matter of choosing which shots to include, which to put next to which, and what method to use to join the shots together. So how does the audience interact with the film through the editing?

1 **Selecting and ordering the shots**

The director can create a mood or atmosphere by choosing certain shots in a certain order, to build a picture in our minds. We automatically link what is happening in one shot with what happens in those either side of it, as this is what happens in real life. Thus, by showing us a window frame and then a shot of a house, we presume the house is what you see out of that window. In this way we are interacting with the film.

Some directors have exploited this idea to extremes. Lev Kuleshov, a Russian filmmaker in the 1920's experimented by showing people shots of an actor in between shots of different objects - food, a dead woman and a child. The audience interpreted the actor's expression (although it never changed!) as being hungry, sad and affectionate. This is because our brains try to make continuative sense of what we see. This placing together of images is called **montage**.

Sergei Eisenstein, another Russian filmmaker of the same era, believed that it was more effective if consecutive shots were not obviously linked, as the audience were forced to think and interact more to make the mental jump from shot to shot. Montage can be used effectively in propaganda, where the filmmaker wants the audience to believe in a certain idea or concept. In a more light-hearted way, it is used today in pop videos and advertising, to encourage us to link ideas.

2 **Joining the shots**

The director has a choice in the way he or she can join the shots together.

- * Smooth continuity of events and 'normality' for the audience is best achieved by using **simple cuts**. There are many technical rules to be remembered so that the actors in consecutive shots are not suddenly looking in a different direction for no reason, but the director can also manipulate time and space by, say, having a car leaving one place in one shot and arriving at another in the next. We accept the convention that the 'journey' has taken place - we interact by knowing that film time is not real time.
- * The director can create suspense by using short shots frequently edited with other shots, as when the murderer breaks into the house and we cut to the victim in the bedroom, then back to the murderer on the stairs and so on. Shock tactics can be used by **jump cuts** to a sudden close-up of an expression or object. Expectations can be built up by cutting from one shot to another and back again repeatedly, then suddenly replacing one shot with a totally new one.
- * **Fade out shots**, where the screen fades to black, or **dissolve** shots, where one image is slowly brought in underneath another one are used to indicate the end of an event and beginning of a new one. These cause us to interact by giving us time to think about what has happened. A third type of cut is a wipe cut, where one part of the screen moves across the other. This is most often done today using computer graphics (swirls, blocks, etc).

The director may also choose to slow the film down at certain moments, thus highlighting say, a romantic moment or creating suspense by delaying the action. We, the audience acknowledge that in film language this is a significant part of the film. He or she may also choose to use black and white film for part or all of the film, which we will automatically read as being events in the past.

By now you should have more of an insight into the language of film and how we interact with it, reading the signals we are given. The criteria we have looked at can be applied to any film and hopefully will help you appreciate why it is that some films are acclaimed even though they may not be huge box office successes.

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Form and *content* are best used as relative terms. They are useful concepts for temporarily isolating specific aspects of art for the purposes of closer examination. Such a separation is artificial, of course, yet this technique can yield more detailed insights into the work of art as a whole. By beginning with an understanding of the basic components of the film medium—its various language systems, as it were—we will see how form and content in the cinema, as in the other arts, are ultimately the same.

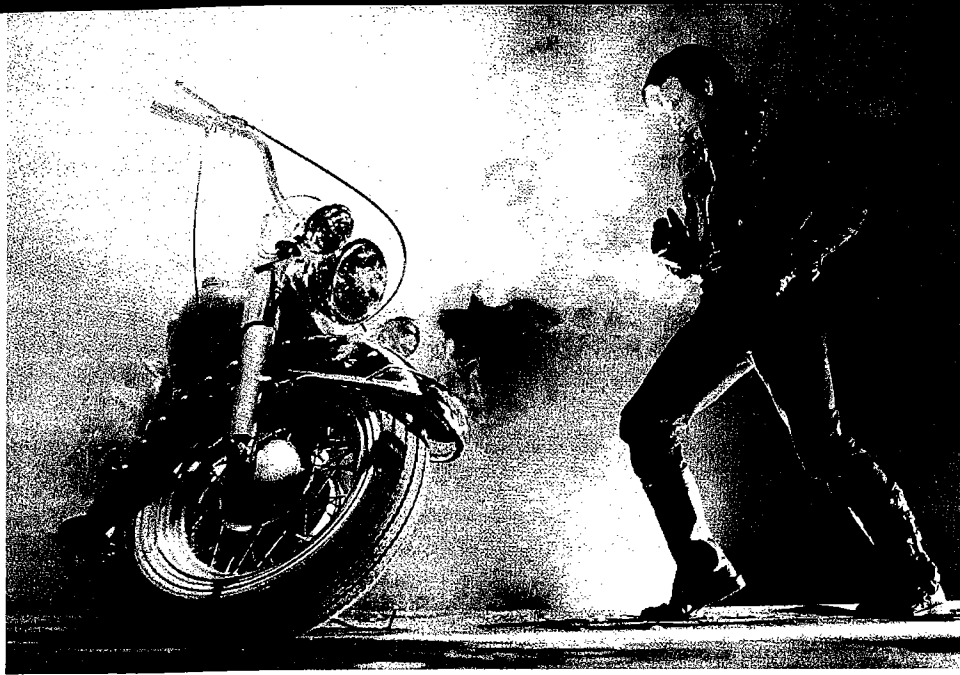
THE SHOTS

The different cinematic **shots** are defined by the amount of subject matter that's included within the **frame** of the screen. In actual practice, however, shot designations vary considerably. A **medium shot** for one director might be considered a **close-up** by another. Furthermore, the longer the shot, the less precise are the designations. In general, shots are determined on the basis of how much of the human figure is in view. The shot is not necessarily defined by the distance between the camera and the object photographed, for in some instances certain lenses distort distances. For example, a **telephoto lens** can produce a close-up on the screen, yet the camera in such shots is generally quite distant from the subject matter.

Although there are many different kinds of shots in the cinema, most of them are subsumed under the six basic categories: (1) the **extreme long shot**, (2) the **long shot**, (3) the **full shot**, (4) the medium shot, (5) the close-up, and (6) the **extreme close-up**. The **deep-focus shot** is usually a variation of the long or extreme long shot.

The *extreme long shot* is taken from a great distance, sometimes almost half a kilometre away. It's almost always an exterior shot and shows much of the locale. Extreme long shots also serve as spatial frames of reference for the closer shots and for this reason are sometimes called **establishing shots**. If people are included in extreme long shots, they usually appear as mere specks on the screen. The most effective use of these shots is often found in **epic** films, where locale plays an important role: westerns, war films, samurai films, and historical movies. Not surprisingly, the greatest masters of the extreme long shot are those directors associated with **epic genres**: D. W. Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein, John Ford, Akira Kurosawa, and Steven Spielberg.

The *long shot* is perhaps the most complex in the cinema, and the term itself one of the most imprecise. Usually, long-shot ranges correspond approximately to the distance between the audience and the stage in the live theatre. The closest range within this category is the *full shot*, which just barely includes the human body in full, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom. Charles Chaplin and other slapstick comedians favoured the full shot because it was best suited to the art of pantomime yet was close enough to capture at least gross facial expressions.



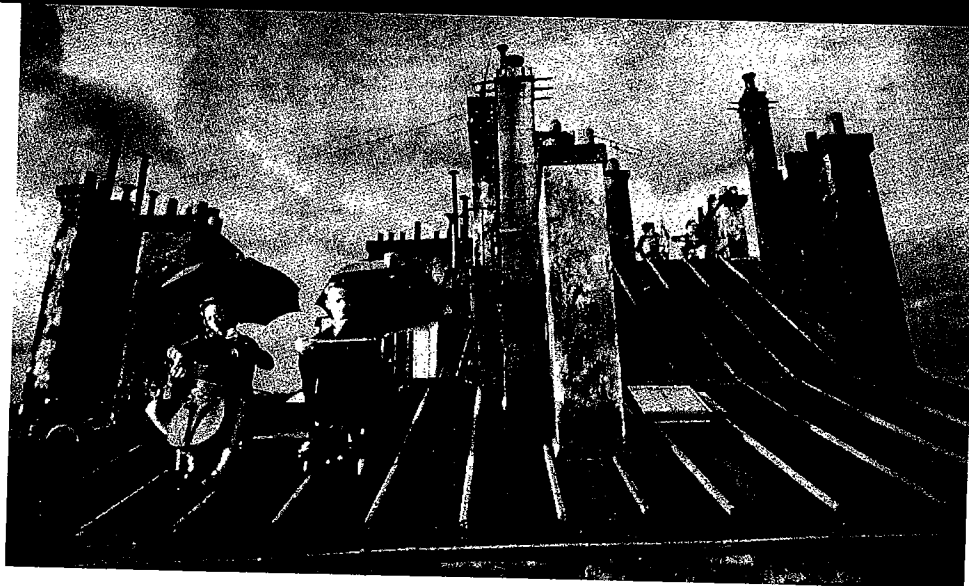
1-8. *Little Shop of Horrors* (U.S.A., 1986), with Steve Martin, directed by Frank Oz.

The long shot's closest range is the full shot (pictured), which features an actor's head near the top of the frame and feet near the bottom. The full shot preserves a balance between people and setting, though it tends to favour people, as do all the closer shots. Beyond the full-shot range, however, the environment tends to dominate. The full shot is ideally suited to dance numbers because it shows the entire body at relatively close range. In this song-and-dance routine, Steve Martin plays Dr. Orin Scrivello, a deranged dentist by day, the hard-riding "leader of the plaque" by night. But to Audrey II, his flesh-eating botanical co-star, he's something else—supper. (The Geffen Film Co.)

The *medium shot* contains a figure from the knees or waist up. A functional shot, it's useful for shooting exposition scenes, for carrying movement, and for dialogue. There are several variations of the medium shot. The *two shot* contains two figures from the waist up. The *three shot* contains three figures; beyond three, the shot tends to become a full shot, unless the other figures are in the background. The **over-the-shoulder shot** usually contains two figures, one with part of his or her back to the camera, the other facing the camera.

The *close-up* shows very little of any locale and concentrates on a relatively small object—the human face, for example. Because the close-up magnifies the size of an object, it tends to elevate the importance of things, often suggesting a symbolic significance. The *extreme close-up* is a variation of this shot. Thus, instead of a face, the extreme close-up might show only a person's eyes or mouth.

The *deep-focus shot* is usually a long shot, consisting of a number of focal distances and photographed in depth (1-13). Sometimes called a *wide-angle shot* because it requires a **wide-angle lens** to photograph, this type of shot captures objects at close, medium, and long ranges simultaneously, all of them in



1-9. *Delicatessen* (France, 1991), with Marie-Laure Dougnac and Dominique Pinon, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro.

At its most distant range, the long shot encompasses roughly the same amount of space as the staging area of a large theatre. Setting tends to dominate the characters, who can get lost unless they're placed near the foreground. Note the two characters, almost imperceptible, in the upper right rear of this set. (Miramax Films)

sharp focus. The objects in a deep-focus shot are carefully arranged in a succession of planes. By using this layering technique, the director can guide the viewer's eye from one distance to another. Generally, the eye travels from a close range to a medium to a long.

THE ANGLES

The angle from which an object is photographed can often serve as an authorial commentary on the subject matter. If the angle is slight, it can serve as a subtle form of emotional colouration. If the angle is extreme, it can represent the major meaning of an image. The angle is determined by where the camera is placed, not the subject photographed. A picture of a person photographed from a high angle actually suggests an opposite interpretation from an image of the same person photographed from a low angle. The subject matter can be identical in the two images, yet the information we derive from both clearly shows that the form is the content, the content the form.

Filmmakers in the realistic tradition tend to avoid extreme angles. Most of their scenes are photographed from eye level, roughly one and a half to two metres off the ground—approximately the way an actual observer might view a scene. Usually these directors attempt to capture the clearest view of an object. **Eye-level shots** are seldom intrinsically dramatic, because they tend to be the norm. Virtually all directors use some eye-level shots, particularly in routine expository scenes.

Formalist directors are not always concerned with the clearest image of an object, but with the image that best captures an object's expressive essence. Extreme angles involve distortions. Yet many filmmakers feel that by distorting the surface realism of an object, a greater truth is achieved—a symbolic truth. Both realist and formalist directors know that the viewer tends to identify with the camera's lens (1–10). The realist wishes to make the audience forget that there's a camera at all. The formalist is constantly calling attention to it.

There are five basic angles in the cinema: (1) the **bird's-eye view**, (2) the high angle, (3) the eye-level shot, (4) the low angle, and (5) the oblique angle. As in the case of shot designations, there are many intermediate kinds of angles. For example, there can be a considerable difference between a low and extreme low angle—although usually, of course, such differences tend to be matters of degree. Generally speaking, the more extreme the angle, the more

1–10. *Bonnie and Clyde* (U.S.A., 1967), with Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, directed by Arthur Penn.

High angles tend to suggest entrapment, powerlessness, or assailability. The higher the angle, the more it tends to imply fatality. The camera's angle can be inferred from the background of a shot: High angles usually show the ground or floor; low angles the sky or ceiling. Because we tend to associate light with safety, high-key lighting is generally nonthreatening and reassuring. But not always. We have been socially conditioned to believe that danger lurks in darkness, so when a traumatic assault takes place in broad daylight, as in this scene, the effect is doubly scary because it's so unexpected. (Warner Bros.)





1-11. *Au revoir les enfants* ("Goodbye, Children," France, 1987), with Gaspard Manesse, directed by Louis Malle.

Movie children are generally photographed from high angles, forcing us to look down on the adorable little tykes. Malle is not so sentimental. His semiautobiographical protagonist (pictured) is presented objectively, mostly from neutral angles. Though the boy is usually dominated from above by the adults in the story, thanks to the predominantly eye-level camera, we view him as an equal, not an inferior. (Orion Pictures)

distracting and conspicuous it is in terms of the subject matter being photographed.

The *bird's-eye view* is perhaps the most disorienting angle of all, for it involves photographing a scene from directly overhead. Because we seldom view events from this perspective, the subject matter of such shots might initially seem unrecognizable and abstract, like the kaleidoscopic arrangements of choreographer Busby Berkeley (3-2). For this reason, filmmakers tend to avoid this type of camera **setup**. In certain contexts, however, this angle can be highly expressive. In effect, bird's-eye shots permit us to hover above a scene like all-powerful gods. The people photographed seem antlike and insignificant. Directors whose themes revolve around the idea of fate—Hitchcock and Fritz Lang, for example—tend to favour high angles.

Ordinary *high-angle shots* are not so extreme, and therefore not so disorienting. The camera is placed on a **crane**, or some natural high promontory, but the sense of audience omnipotence is not overwhelming. High angles give a viewer a sense of a general overview, but not necessarily one implying destiny or fate. High angles reduce the height of the objects photographed and usually include the ground or floor as background. Movement is slowed down: This angle tends to be ineffective for conveying a sense of speed, useful for suggesting tediousness. The importance of setting or envi-

ronment is increased: The locale often seems to swallow people. High angles reduce the importance of a subject. A person seems harmless and insignificant photographed from above. This angle is also effective for conveying a character's self-contempt.

Some filmmakers avoid angles because they are too manipulative and judgmental. In the movies of the Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu, the camera is usually placed just over a metre from the floor—as if an observer were viewing the events seated Japanese style. Ozu treated his characters as equals; his approach discourages us from viewing them either condescendingly or sentimentally. For the most part, they are ordinary people, neither very virtuous nor very corrupt. But Ozu lets them reveal themselves. He believed that value judgments are implied through the use of angles, and he kept his camera neutral and dispassionate. Eye-level shots permit us to make up our own minds about what kind of people are being presented.

Low angles have the opposite effect of high. They increase height and thus are useful for suggesting verticality. More practically, they increase a short actor's height. Motion is speeded up, and in scenes of violence especially, low angles capture a sense of confusion. Environment is usually minimized in low angles, and often the sky or a ceiling is the only background. Psychologically, low angles heighten the importance of a subject. The figure looms threateningly over the spectator, who is made to feel insecure and dom-

1-12. *Nosferatu* (Germany, 1922), with Max Schreck, cinematography by Fritz Arno Wagner, directed by F. W. Murnau.

When an extreme low angle is combined with a perspective-distorting wide-angle lens, a character can seem threatening, for he or she looms above the camera—and us—like a towering giant. (*Janus Films*)



inated. A person photographed from below inspires fear, awe, and respect. For this reason, low angles are often used in propaganda films or in scenes depicting heroism.

An *oblique angle* involves a lateral tilt of the camera. When the image is projected, the horizon is skewed. A man photographed at an oblique angle will look as though he's about to fall to one side. This angle is sometimes used for **point-of-view shots**—to suggest the imbalance of a drunk, for example. Psychologically, oblique angles suggest tension, transition, and impending movement. The natural horizontal and vertical lines of a scene are converted into unstable diagonals. Oblique angles are not used often, for they can disorient a viewer. In scenes depicting violence, however, they can be effective in capturing precisely this sense of visual anxiety.

1-13. *Citizen Kane* (U.S.A., 1941), with Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, and Everett Sloane (at far end of table), directed by Welles.

Welles's deep-focus photography is meant to be admired for its virtuosity as well as its functionalism. André Bazin, an enthusiastic champion of deep-focus techniques, believed that it reduces the importance of editing and preserves the cohesiveness of real space and time. Many spatial planes can be captured simultaneously in a single **take**, maintaining the objectivity of a scene. Bazin felt that audiences were thus encouraged to be more creative—less passive—in understanding the relationships between people and things. In this photo, for example, we are free to look at the faces of over two dozen characters. "The public may choose, with its eyes, what it wants to see of a shot," Welles said. "I don't like to force it." (RKO)

