

Film Studies Analysis Guide

Basic Terms

Shot	One continuous piece of film footage, ending with an edit, or cut to the next shot.
Sequence	A series of shots combined to represent a discrete set of actions or a coherent narrative section.
Scene	Similar to a "sequence," a series of shots combined to represent a set of actions happening within the same time and place.
Motif	Anything repeated more than a few times in a film. A motif can be visual (an image or cinematic technique), sonic (a sound or piece of music), or rhetorical (a word, phrase, metaphor, etc.).

Categories of Analysis

Cinematography	A term used to define the ways in which the camera captures the shot. Under the heading of cinematography, we speak of such things as the different lenses used by the camera, how the camera frames the shot, the angle of the camera relative to the action, and how the camera moves.
Editing	Refers to how the individual shots are spliced together. The norm here is "continuity editing," in which shots are put together to achieve narrative continuity—to make the action appear to flow logically and naturally from shot to shot.
Mise-en-scène	Literally meaning "put into the scene," this term refers to the arrangement of actors and objects in front of the camera. Setting, lighting, costuming, and acting are aspects of mise-en-scène.
Sound	Refers to both the sounds that come from the scene itself, such as spoken dialogue or ambient noise, and the sounds that are imposed on the scene, such as voice-overs or musical scores.

Cinematography

Framing

Extreme Long Shot	A shot of a character's full figure at a great distance, including a panoramic view of the surroundings.
Long Shot	A shot that includes a character's full figure as well as the surroundings.
Medium Shot	A shot that captures a figure from the waist up.
Close-Up	The frame is filled primarily by the subject's face, including little to no background.
Extreme Close-Up	A shot filled entirely by a small part of the subject's body.

Camera Angle

High Angle	The camera looks down at the subject.
Low Angle	The camera looks up at the subject.
Canted Angle	A shot in which the framing is tipped, or no longer horizontal.

Mobile Framing

Pan	The camera scans horizontally from a fixed axis.
Tilt	The camera scans vertically from a fixed axis.
Track	The camera follows the action, travelling along a parallel path to capture the movement.

Cinematography (continued)

Lenses and Focus

Long Lens	Also called a "telephoto lens," this long focal length lens is used to capture subjects at a distance. It foreshortens the distance between background and foreground.
Wide Lens	A short focal length lens that emphasizes the distance between foreground and background.
Deep Focus	Objects in the background and foreground are equally in focus.
Shallow Focus	Only objects in one plane are in focus, while others are out of focus.
Rack Focus	A shift from one plane of focus to another within a shot.
Zoom	Changes focal length to create motion towards or away from the subject.

Process Shots

Superimposition	Images are overlaid within the frame.
Digital Animation	Images created or modified by computer software.
Title Cards	Text from outside the world of the narrative appearing on screen to supply information to the audience.
Sign Text	Text that appears on screen from within the world of the narrative.

Editing

Basic Terms

Continuity Editing The process of putting shots together to create the impression of continuous narrative time and/or visually coherent space.

Graphic and Temporal Relations

180 Degree Rule A principle of continuity editing dictating that the camera remain on one side of the action to maintain the viewer's perspective and understanding of the left-right spatial relationship between characters.

Shot/ Reverse Shot Alternating shots between subjects, usually in conversation, viewed from different camera positions.

Crosscutting Transitioning back and forth between two or more action sequences taking place simultaneously.

Eyeline Match A cut between a shot of a person looking towards an object and a shot of the object being viewed.

Match on Action A cut that transitions between two different views of the same action so that the action appears continuous from one shot to the next.

Graphic match A cut that relates consecutive shots through repeated compositional features (shapes, colors, patterns, etc.).

Jump Cut A cut that distorts continuity, skipping ahead in time or space.

Mise-en-scène

Basic Terms

Frame	The spatial parameters of a shot within which the scene is composed.
Composition	The arrangement of subjects, props, and environments within a given shot.

Setting

Period Piece	A film set in a distinctive past era, costumed and decorated in the particular style of the period.
Level of Realism	The degree to which the world of the film resembles the audience's familiar reality.

Lighting

Three Point Lighting	Standard lighting using three light sources: a <i>key light</i> to provide the main source of illumination along with a <i>fill light</i> from another side and <i>back light</i> from behind.
High Key	Nearly all parts of the image are brightly illuminated.
Low Key	Extreme contrast between light and dark within an image.
Chiaroscuro	The use of strong contrasts between light and dark to create a sense of visual drama or a sense of volume and dimension to the space and the figures within it.

Acting

Level of Realism	The degree to which the actors' dramatic choices resemble real-life human behavior and interaction.
Acting Styles	Performance conventions that change with time period and type of film.

Sound

Basic Terms

Diegetic Sound Sound produced in the world of the film, taking place within the narrative (dialogue, sound effects, etc.).

Extra-Diegetic Sound Sound originating from outside the narrative, not produced in the on-screen setting (voice-overs, soundtrack, etc.).

Sound Transition

Sound Bridge A transition assisted by a continuous sound from one scene to the next, often to introduce a new scene before it appears visually.

Edit on Sound A cut made on a sound cue.