

Audio visual media language. Revision Booklet

Audio visual media language:

1. **CAMERA SHOTS:** the framing of the subject that indicates the distance between the subject and the camera.
2. **CAMERA ANGLES:** the position of the camera in relation to the subject of a shot. The camera might be at a high angle, a low angle or at eye level with what is being filmed.
3. **CAMERA MOVEMENTS:** the location of the camera with regards the subject that is filmed.
4. **PHOTOGRAPHY:** the different ways of creating an image through the means of the use of lens and composition.
5. **EDITING:** the juxtaposition of shots in order to create meaning.
6. **SOUND:** Use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound for narrative and dramatic purposes.
7. **MISE-EN-SCENE:** the different elements in the staging of a scene.

In this booklet you will find the definitions of the different types of camera shots, angles and movements as well as the different editing, sound and mise-en-scene concepts and terminology, alongside examples which illustrate those definitions.

1. CAMERA SHOTS: the framing of the subject that indicates the distance between the subject and the camera.

Aerial shot – A camera shot taken from an overhead position. Often used as an establishing shot.



Wide, long or general shot – Any of these three nomenclatures would be correct. This is a shot that shows the characters in their environment.



Medium/Mid shot – the framing of a subject from waist up.



Close Up – A head and shoulders shot often used to show the expressions and emotions of a character. Also can be a shot of an object, filmed from close to the object or zoomed in to it, that reveals detail.



Extreme Close Up – A shot where a part of a face or body of a character fills the whole frame/dominates the frame. Also can be a shot of an object where only a small part of it dominates the frame.



Two shot – A shot of two characters, possibly engaging in conversation. Usually to signify/establish some sort of relationship.



Over the shoulder shot – looking at a subject from behind a character's shoulder. The character facing the subject usually occupies 1/3 of the frame but it depends on what meaning the director wants to create (for example, if the subject is an inferior character, the character facing them may take up more of the frame to emphasise this) Widely used to depict dialogues between two characters.



Overhead shot – a type of camera shot in which the camera is positioned above the character, action or object being filmed.



These next three shots are shots used in **editing** for **narrative purposes**. They can be any of the previous ones in terms of the distance between the camera and the subject, but in editing always serve a very specific narrative purpose:

Establishing shot – A shot that establishes a scene, often giving the viewer information about where the scene is set. Can be a close up shot (of a sign, etc.) but is often a wide/long shot at the beginning of a scene.



Point-Of-View shot (POV) – Shows a view from the subject's perspective. This shot is usually edited so that the viewer is aware whose point of view it is.



Reaction shot – a shot that shows the reaction of a character either to another character or an event within the sequence.



2. CAMERA ANGLES: the position of the camera in relation to the subject of a shot. The camera might be at a high angle, a low angle or at eye level with what is being filmed.

Bird's eye angle – A camera angle from above the subject or object. Often used to make the subject/object unaware of being observed or highlight its vulnerability.



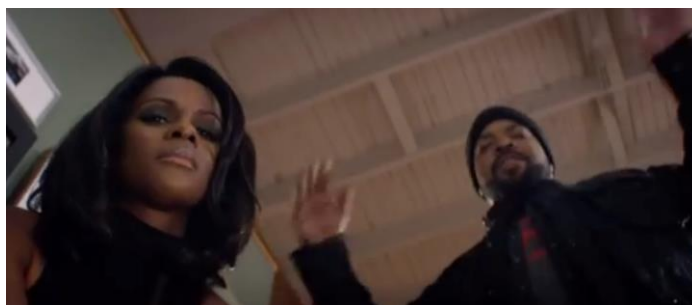
High Angle – A camera angle that looks down at a subject/object. Often used to make the subject appear small or vulnerable.



Eye level – The most conventional camera angle, in which the camera stands at the same level as the subject/object.



Low Angle – A camera angle that looks up at a subject/object. Often used to make the subject appear powerful or dominant.



Worm eye angle – This is a very low angle shot. A camera angle from below the object. Often used to highlight the power of the object or to make it look bigger than the subject's view.



Canted framing (or slanted or oblique) – A camera angle that makes what is shot appear to be skewed or tilted. It conveys uneasiness and awkwardness and emphasises action.

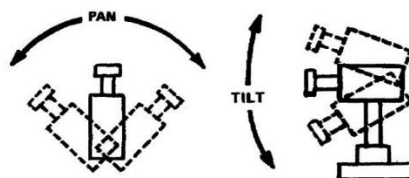


3. CAMERA MOVEMENTS: the location of the camera with regards the subject that is filmed.

Pan (horizontal) – Where the camera pivots horizontally, either from right to left or left to right to reveal a set or setting. This can be used to give the viewer a panoramic view, often used to establish a scene.

Whip pan – a very fast pan between two or more characters all points of interest. It gives the impression that the camera has been 'surprised' by activity and is used in the place of a more conventional cut or shot/reverse shot.

Tilt (vertical) – where a camera scans a set or setting vertically (otherwise similar to a pan).



Track – a shot where the camera follows a subject/object. The tracking shot can include smooth movements forward, backward, along the side of the subject, or on a curve but cannot include complex movement around a subject. 'Track' refers to rails in which a wheeled platform (which has the camera on it) sits on in order to carry out smooth movement.



Crane – A crane shot is sometimes used to signify the end of a scene/ programme /film. The effect is achieved by the camera being put onto a crane that can move upward.



Stedicam – A *steadicam* is a stabilising mount for a camera which mechanically isolates the operator's movement from the camera, allowing a very smooth shot even when the operator is moving quickly over an uneven surface. Informally, the word may also be used to refer to the combination of the mount and camera.



Hand-held camera – A shot filmed with the camera not on a tripod but instead held by the camera man, often whilst walking. This makes the shots

seem quite shaky. This can make the audience feel the scene is more realistic or can make us feel like we are part of the action.

4. CAMERA POSITION (Lens and photographic composition)

Depth of field – The area within which objects are in focus; a large depth of field allows a great range of objects to be in focus simultaneously, while a shallow depth of field offers a very limited area in focus. Depth of field normally depends on how far "open" a lens is (a lens works much like an eye, with the pupil opening or contracting to control light). An "open" lens (for example, f 1.4) creates a shallow depth of field while a "stopped down" (contracted) lens (for example f 16) creates a large depth of field.



Zoom – Using a zoom lens to appear to be moving closer to (zoom in) or further away from (zoom out) a subject/object when in fact the camera may not move (so, strictly not camera movement). Can be used for dramatic effect.

Focus – placing emphasis on a certain object/area within the frame by blurring out everything surrounding it.

Pull focus – Describes a shot where one thing was on focus, and then the lens is changed so that something else stops being blurry and becomes in focus. Often used to highlight an aspect of the image over another or how something has suddenly become more important in that shot.

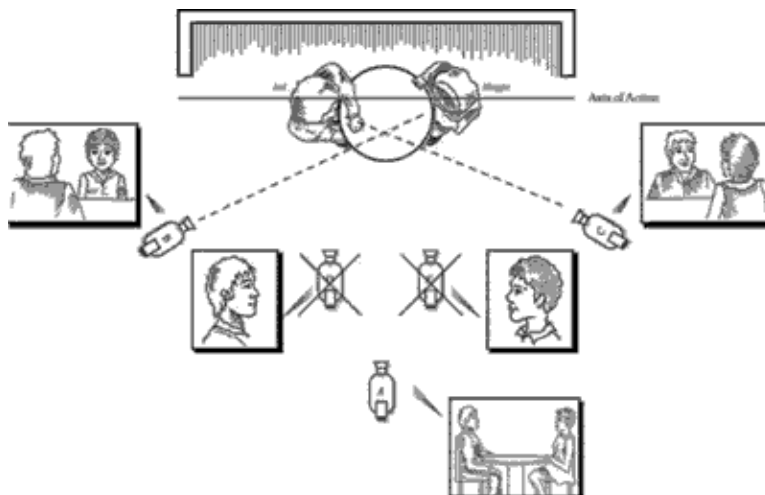
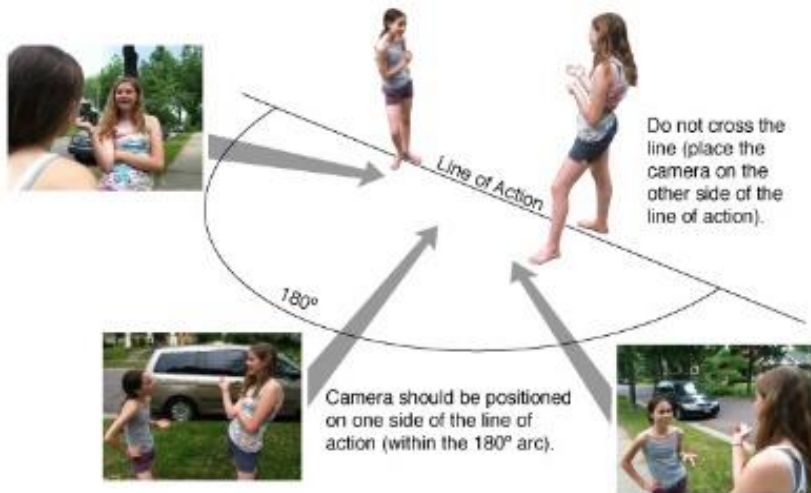
Soft focus: In certain images, the use of a special lens or filter to create a hazy light around the subject. Soft focus shots are associated with the romantic or sentimental treatment of subject matter.





Rule of thirds – The rule of thirds is a useful composition technique that can be used in photography to produce balanced and interesting images. It involves mentally dividing up the image in nine equal areas by using two vertical lines and two horizontal lines, equidistant from each other. The important elements in the scene must be positioned along those lines, or at the points where they meet.

180 degree Rule – During a scene featuring a conversation between two people, an imaginary line or axis joining those two people together, which enables to present those characters face to face. Adhering to the 180 degree rule would mean you would always ensure your camera was on one side of that line and the camera would never be crossed to the other side. Sticking to the 180 degree rule allows the viewer understand the positioning of the characters.



3. EDITING

Editing – the stage in the film-making process in which sound and images are organised into an overall narrative.

Juxtaposition – (also known as the Kuleshov effect) The placement of a series of images in order to create a narrative effect.



Linear narrative – a style of storytelling in which events happen chronologically.

Continuity editing – the most common type of editing, which aims to create a sense of reality and time moving forward. Also called invisible editing referring to how the technique does not draw attention to the editing process.

Cross cutting (also known as **parallel editing**) – the editing technique of alternating, interweaving, or interspersing one narrative action (scene, sequence or event) with another – usually in different locations or places, thus combining the two: this editing technique usually connotes parallel action (that takes place simultaneously). **Parallel editing** – a type of editing in which events in two different locations are cut together, in order to imply a connection between the two events. Often used to dramatically build tension and/or suspense in chase scenes or to compare two different scenes.

Cutaways – A brief shot that momentarily interrupts continuous action by briefly inserting another simultaneous action, object, detail of the location or character, which may or may not be related to the main action in that scene, followed by a cutback to the original shot.

Jump cut – An abrupt, disorientating transitional cut in the middle of a continuous shot in which the action is noticeably advanced in time and/or cut between two similar shots, usually done to create discontinuity for artistic effect. Widely used in music videos.

Fade – a type of transition where the image gradually fades and disappears, leaving a white or black screen. A fade to black often suggests that time has passed or an action has ended. A fade to white often suggests a dream sequence or a flashback.

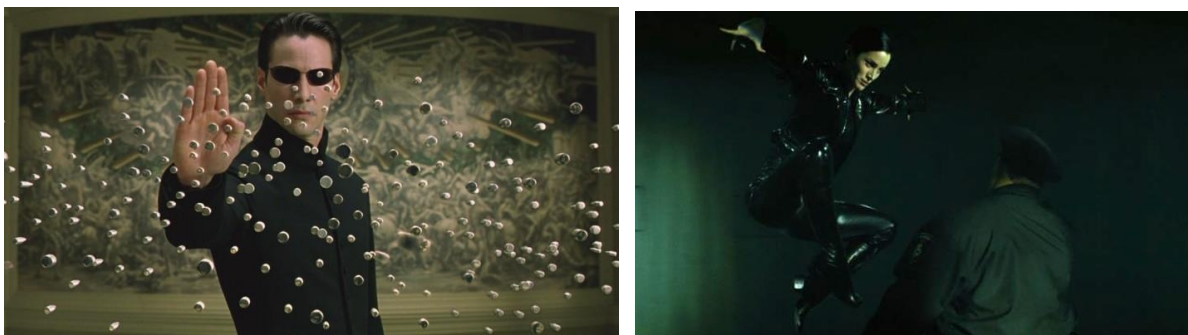
Dissolve – A transition between two shots, in which the first shot fades into the second. Often used to link two scenes together or to connote an ellipsis.



Eye-line match – a type of edit which cuts from one character to what that character has been looking at (often used as a 'point of view' shot)



Freeze Frame – the effect of seemingly stopping a film in order to focus in on one event or element.



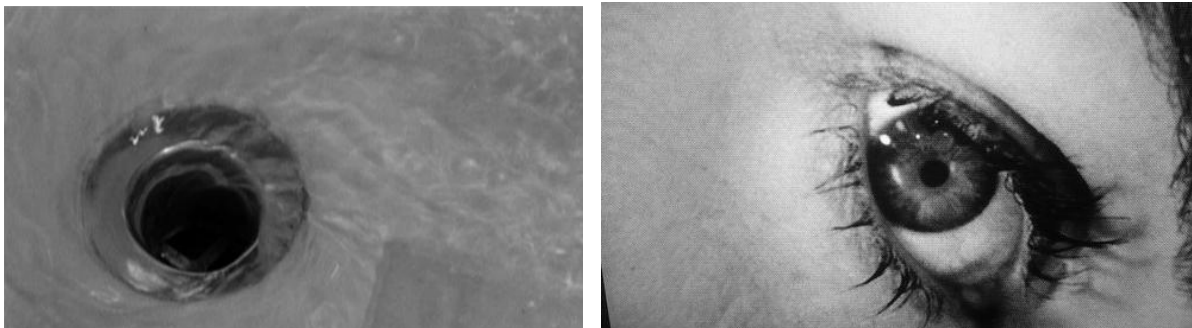
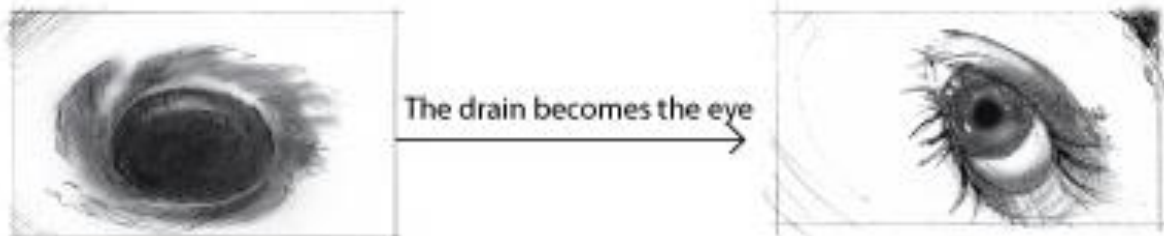
Flashback – a scene or moment in a film in which the audience is shown an event that happened earlier in the film's narrative.

Shot Reverse Shot – cutting between two people having a conversation (rather than including them both in one static mid shot) can help to contrast them and make them seem different. It highlights their differences and also allows us to see the reactions of characters.



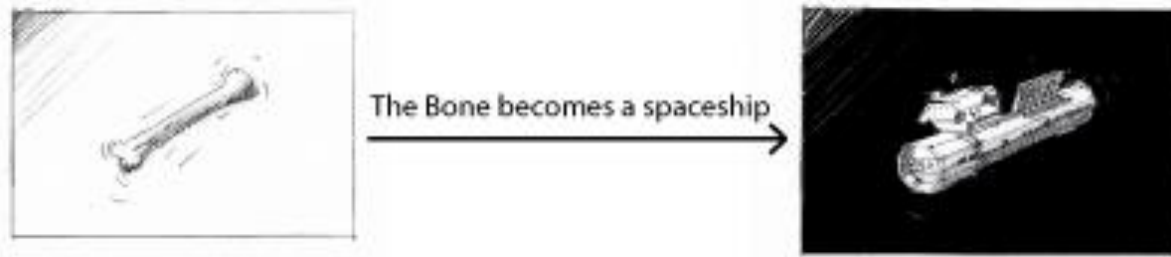
Ellipsis – the removal or shortening of elements of a narrative to speed up the action. (For example, an editor might use ellipsis in a sequence about a young man taking a drink by cutting straight to him as an old man, drunk and alone. The editor has missed out the story in the middle to speed up the action and show us how quick this man's life has passed and has been ruined by alcohol.)

Graphic match – juxtaposition of two shots in which two different objects of the same shape are dissolved from one into the other.



Psycho (A. Hitchcock, 1960)

In the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), the next following **graphic match** acts as a narrative **ellipsis** of thousands of years.



2001: A space odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, 1969)

Match on action - A shot that emphasises continuity of space and time by matching the action of the preceding shot with the continuation of the action. (For example a shot of a door opening after a shot of a close up of a character's hand turning a door handle.)

Montage editing – the juxtaposition of seemingly unconnected images in order to create meaning.

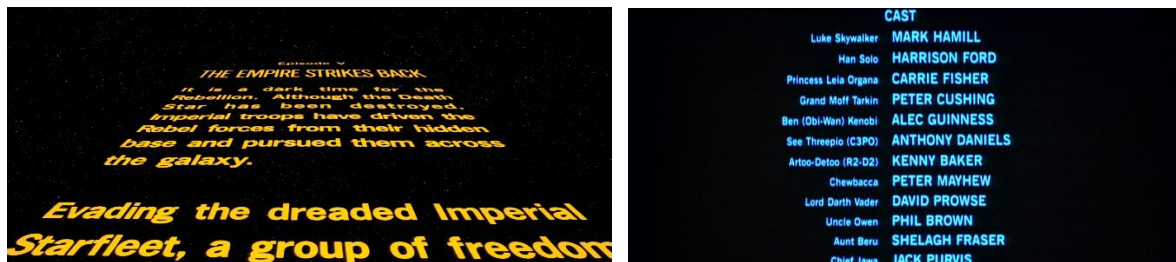
Visual effects - visual effects are usually used to alter previously-filmed elements by adding, removing or enhancing objects within the scene.

Split Screen – an editing technique which involves the cinema screen being split into two or more parts to allow the showing of events that are taking place at the same time.

Superimpose – the appearance of writing/symbols or images on top of an image so that both are visible at once, increasing the amount of information the viewer has in one shot.

Establishing shot – the shot (usually wide or long, but it may also be a detail close up), used at the start of a film or programme, or at the start of a new scene or a new section of a programme, to establish the relationship between the set/location and the characters and narrative.

Titles and credits – the information at the beginning and end of a film, which gives details of cast and crew, etc. as well as additional prologues or introductions to the story.



6. SOUND

Diegetic sound – Sound that can be heard by the characters within a scene. This is sound that is part of the imaginary world.

Non-diegetic sound – Sound that the characters cannot hear and is not part of the imaginary world of the story. This includes a musical soundtrack or a voiceover (however this excludes a narration by a character within the story – referred to as an internal monologue and is diegetic).

You can find here an example of diegetic and non-diegetic sound turned into a gag in the cartoon comedy series *Family Guy*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPM1o9QKw1Q>

Another example from the film *Stranger than Fiction* (Mark Forster, 2006):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6hnxtl4g9M>

Synchronous sound - synchronous sound is sound that is in sync with the visuals and was filmed at the same time.

Asynchronous sound – Sound that is either out of sync with the visuals or is unrelated to the visuals. Sound that is just out of sync would make the viewer feel disorientated and would make the characters and scene seem strange. Sound that is unrelated to the visuals may be there for emphasising something. For example, in the *Godfather* film, we see a man murdering people in cold blood, but hear the sounds of a priest christening a baby. This contrast emphasises the loss of innocent life.

Contrapuntal sound – sound or music that seems strange in comparison to the scene we are seeing. For example in the film *The Shining*, during beautiful scenes of winding roads and countryside on a sunny day, we hear quite scary ominous music.

Score – The musical component of a programme's soundtrack, usually composed specifically for the scene. This is always non-diegetic.

Sound effects – Sounds that are added to a film during the post-production stage. These can be either diegetic or non-diegetic.

Sound bridge – Sound used to link two different shots or scenes together.

Ambient sound – Different noises in the background to set the scene e.g. traffic + cars = city sounds. These are always diegetic.

Voice over: the use of a voice, over images, perhaps as an introduction, a linking narrative device for or to comment on action. It allows the audience to see inside the head of a character, helping us to empathise with them.

Dialogue – the words the characters say. What do the characters actually say? Do they reveal their beliefs, or their attitudes? How do they say it? If someone's voice sounds nervous and wobbly it tells us a lot about their character. If they speak softly it implies they are weak or emotional. If they have a deep booming voice it makes them seem more masculine. Don't forget accents as they tell us where someone is from and emphasise their differences from others.

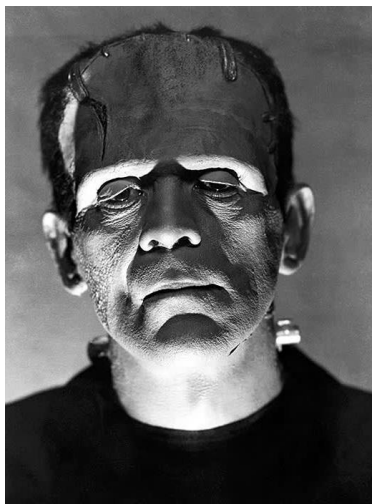
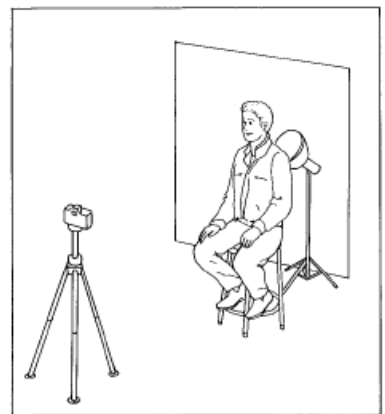
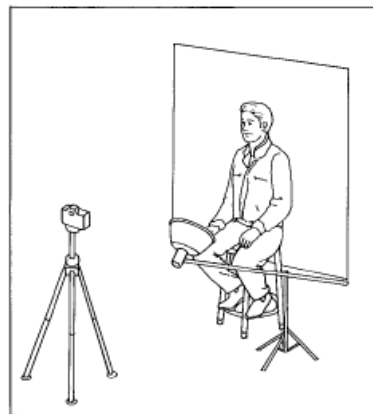
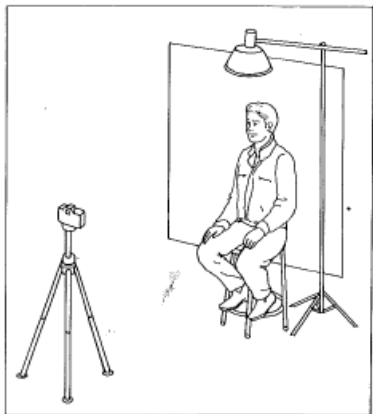
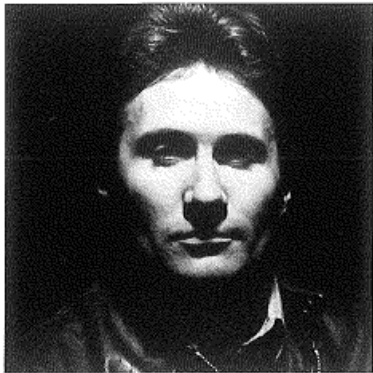
Direct address (also known as breaking the 4th wall) – where the character talks to the audience directly. Don't confuse this with a point of view shot. It is very unusual and breaks the reality for the audience, but also helps us to see that character as an equal, a friend, as someone to sympathise with. Often seen in shows like Scrubs and Malcolm in the Middle.

Pitch – Low pitch describes a sound that is deep and low (eg Thunder) and high pitch describes a sound that is higher and lighter (eg a phone ringing)

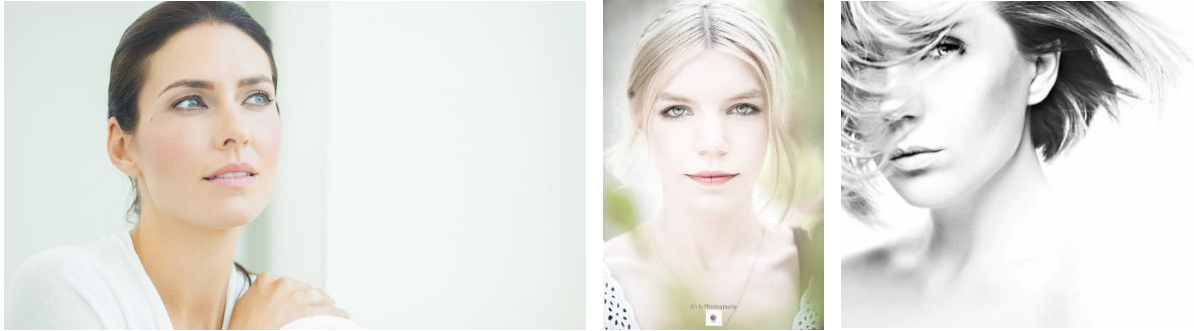
7. MISE-EN-SCENE

Mise en scene – a French term, which literally means 'put into the frame'. When analysing a sequence, the term refers to the different elements used to stage the scene (props, costume, lighting, colour, makeup etc.)

Lighting (general) – can be used to set the mood of a scene as well as to highlight important characters or actions in the shot.



High Key Lighting – A bright and well-lit scene with very few shadows. Often used to make a location or character seem friendly, happy and safe.



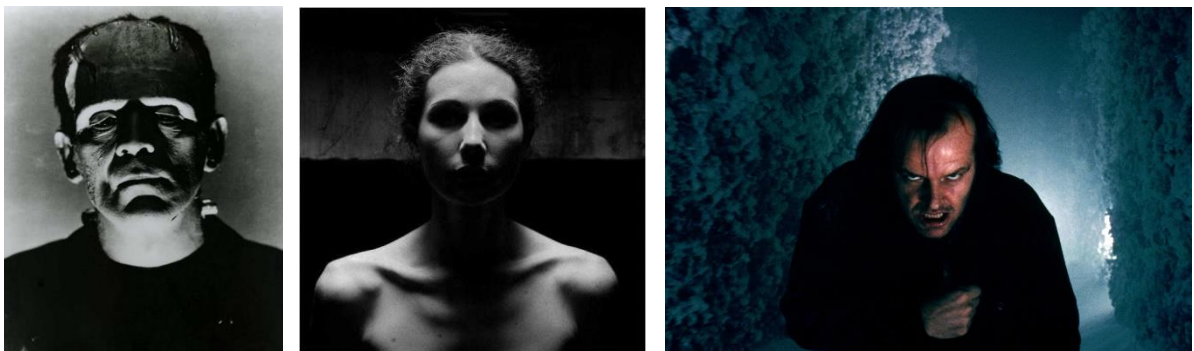
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUvkWkxFb2M>

Low key Lighting – a dimly lit scene with lots of shadows. Often used to make a location or character seem shady, untrustworthy, dangerous and unsafe.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91gU93J2Q8k&feature=relmfu>

Chiaroscuro Lighting – a scene lit with extreme low lighting and high contrast, with lots of shadows and some highlights. Can be used to make a location or character seem very dramatic and unusual.



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SIH_uvPuRw

An example of **chiaroscuro lighting** applied to a TV series poster:



By using a **single source of light** placed above the model (so the light, in this case, comes **from above**), this image manages to recreate the “Jolly Roger” pirate flag (skull and bones) as an iconic poster for the pirates TV drama Black

Props – The decorative and symbolic elements used in staging a scene, as well as those that a character bears e.g. a gun, a bunch of flowers, etc. They can tell us lots about the type of character or genre of the film.

Costumes – Clothes a character is wearing. They tell us lots about a character, their role in the narrative, etc. For example a policeman’s or a soldier’s uniform connotes the role of the character or the genre of the film. Specific costumes are paramount in period dramas or genre films such as westerns, war films, etc.



Hair & Make Up – the appearance of a character bear significant connotations about the character itself, as well as the genre or period of the film.



Body Shape and Language – the way a character's body looks and the way they hold their body e.g. confident, slumping down, cowering from someone etc. It tells us what type of person they are and how they feel about others.

Facial Features and Expression – the way a character's face looks and shows emotion. For example a shocked expression, sadness or a look of love. Other interesting features such as bad teeth, small, squinty eyes, etc. tell us about the character's personality.



Voice / Tone – The way a character speaks defines its personality. Someone who stutters might be nervous; someone who shouts may be angry; someone who speaks softly may be well educated, be in charge or be powerful.

Colour – Colours in a scene bear symbolic meanings. Red can connote anger, passion, danger, love. Blue can seem calm and peaceful, sometimes sad. These symbolic connotations will vary depending on the context of the scene.

Location – A place where the scene is set. A location can tell us lots about the characters who inhabit it or the genre of a film. For example a dirty, blood stained basement could signify that a character is a villain or a murder has taken place. A messy bedroom might signify that the character who inhabit it is disorganised. Additionally, the location or setting can also establish the genre of the film.



Breaking the Fourth Wall (Direct Address) – Describes a time where a character may look directly at the camera and speak to the audience. This is highly unusual but can be seen regularly in shows like the TV series *Malcolm in the Middle* or films such *Amelie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) or *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* (Ethan and Joel Cohen, 2018). This is designed to emphasise that character as the most important, as powerful, and as someone we should be siding with as it helps us feel like we are “one of them” and as though we are one of their friends.

