Akron After School Middle School Enrichment

**Lights, Camera, Action!**

“Movie Makers” : Film Making 101
Composing a picture

How you set up the camera to film the arrangement of elements in your picture is very important. A picture is successful when the elements of light, colour, tone, form and spacing all work together. This is called composition and the changing of any of the elements can alter the meaning of the image for the viewer. For example a person placed in the centre of the picture can have more impact than someone situated in the corner of the image. A balanced composition is generally more pleasing than a chaotic one.

This image of Brett Whitely’s sculpture Almost Once is a balanced image. The sculpture is in the centre of the picture and viewer’s eye is drawn towards the middle of the picture and then moves upwards. This points to the large scale of the sculpture. The form (or shape) is reminiscent of the rectangular outline of skyscrapers. This view shows the negative space (i.e. the space between the matchsticks and around the sculpture) of the sculpture well. Something which eventually catches the eye is the small white square on the bottom left hand side of the picture. This is distant sculpture in the Art Gallery gardens called Mobius Sea.

When the photo is taken from a side angle the negative space is not as evident. The matchsticks still dominate the picture and the background shows part of the cityscape. Centrepoint Tower appears to be at an angle and this distracts the viewer from focusing on the sculpture. Tucked behind the unburned matchstick is a rectangular skyscraper.

Taken from another angle the background includes the tree as well as part of the Art Gallery building. While the matchsticks still dominate the picture, the composition has been altered with the rectangular roof of the gallery matching the base of the sculpture. This is to indicate that the sculpture, while outside, still belongs to the gallery. Neither matchstick is perpendicular to the edge of the picture. This could also distract the viewer from focusing on the sculpture.
Camera Angles

There are four main types of camera angles used to suggest a relationship between the viewer and the subject of the image. As with camera shots, there can be degrees of variation on these angles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>The camera is placed above and looks down on the subject or object.</td>
<td>It is used to make the character look small and also indicate that the character is weak or inferior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>An eye angle places the audience on eye-level with the character.</td>
<td>It is used to indicate that the character is on equal footing with the audience. It suggests reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>The camera is placed looking up on the subject or object.</td>
<td>It is used to make the character look big and indicates that the character is powerful and dominant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead/ Bird’s eye</td>
<td>The camera is placed overhead or directly above the object or scene.</td>
<td>Characters and objects are made to look small and vulnerable. A character or object could be followed at a different speed or pace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
High Angle

It is used to make the character look small and also indicate that the character is weak or inferior.
Eye to Eye

It is used to indicate that the character is on equal footing with the audience. It suggests reality.
Low Angle
It is used to make the character look big and indicates that the character is powerful and dominant.
Overhead/Bird's eye
Characters and objects are made to look small and vulnerable. A character or object could be followed at a different speed or pace.
Shotlist

A shot is an uninterrupted sequence of frames taken by a video camera. In other words, this is the continuous film taken from when the camera has been turned on to when it has been turned off.

A list of shots helps in the planning and filming of your movie. An example of a shot list can be seen below. Click on the link to print out your copy of the shot list template.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shots 1 to 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 1:</strong> Long Shot establishing the view of a bank that is not too well known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 2:</strong> Medium Shot of Dick and Tom walk across the view of the camera. You get a view of their head and the side of their body. This shot is to only to show they have arrived at the bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 3:</strong> Big Close Up Shot of Dick and Tom. They look at each other and then they separate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 4:</strong> Medium Long Shot of Dick walking to the writing desk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 5:</strong> Medium Shot of Dick at the writing desk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shot 6:</strong> Extreme close-up shot of Dick’s hand picking up a deposit slip and writing on the deposit slip “This is a stickup. Put all your muny in this bag”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Extreme close-up**

To make the viewer aware of some specific detail in the film. It can be used to heighten tension.
Very close-up
This shows the close detail of the character's eyes and mouth. It can be used to heighten tension.
Big close-up
This shows the detail of the character’s face.
Close-up

This used to introduce a character and allows the character to show emotions. It can be used to heighten tension.
Medium close-up
Good for conversation between two characters.
Medium shot

This allows you to get to know the character more closely by viewing their facial expressions and body language.
Medium long shot
Places the person in context.
**Long shot**

This allows the viewer to understand the relationship between the characters and their environment.
**Extra long shot**

This gives information to the viewer about where the action is to take place. It often sets the atmosphere of a film.
Roles in movie making

There a number of very specific roles taken on by people in order to get a movie made. The main roles associated with movie making are described below.

As a group you will need to assign roles to members of your team. There may be a need for some people to take on several roles.

In the movie you are making, the whole group will be responsible for developing the story and the script. Other groups will be your actors. Click on the link to open the template to assign the roles of movie making in your group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Responsible for creating the vision of the film (e.g. James Cameron <em>Titanic</em>, Steven Spielberg <em>Schindler’s List, Saving Private Ryan</em>, Ron Howard <em>A Beautiful Mind</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Responsible for overseeing the film and making sure everything gets completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screenwriter</td>
<td>Writes the story and script.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Works in front of the camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Responsible for editing all the individual shots into scenes and then making this into a cohesive story. (e.g. Zach Staenberg <em>Matrix</em>, John Bloom <em>Gandhi</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production designer</td>
<td>Responsible for the location and the feel of the film.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of photography</td>
<td>Responsible for the lighting and ensuring the wishes of the director are carried out in relation to the filming (angles, movement, shots) (e.g. Dean Semler <em>Dances with Wolves</em>, Andrew Lesnie <em>Lord of the Rings</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art director</td>
<td>Responsible for the sets, costume and make-up (e.g. Catherine Martin <em>Moulin Rouge</em>, Lizzy Gardiner <em>The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert</em>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are a variety of camera movements the director can use to make meaning on screen for the viewer. They are described below and to see an example of these movements click on the links associated with each type of movement.

In this unit of work the Dolly and the Tracking camera movements will not be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>The camera moves towards or away from a particular object.</td>
<td>It is used to make objects appear closer or further away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panning</td>
<td>The camera turns from side to side, i.e. from left to right or right to left.</td>
<td>It is often used in the opening scene of a movie or can be used to show the landscape from the view of the characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilt</td>
<td>The camera moves diagonally from the top to the bottom of the frame.</td>
<td>It is used to show the character from head to toe and can emphasize size. It can also indicate speed and reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolly</td>
<td>The camera moves towards or away from the character. The camera is often placed on wheels to allow for a smooth movement.</td>
<td>It allows you to follow the characters or the action, from one place to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td>The camera moves along with the actors or the action. The camera is usually on wheels.</td>
<td>It engages the viewer in the action where they can feel part of it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

The greater part of this glossary was kindly supplied by Karen Stapleton of the AIS.

**Back Lighting**
The main light source comes from behind the character.

**Boom**
An extendable arm used for holding a microphone above the actors and outside the frame.

**Camera angles**
The position of the camera in relation to the subject being shown. The angle from which the camera takes the shot has an important effect on what the viewers see and on the effect of the shot. The camera angle, or where the camera is placed, is important as it indicates point of view, i.e. from whose perspective we are seeing the action, such as the character, audience or director. The five basic angles are overhead, high angle, eye level, low angle and undershot.

**Camera movement**
As the camera moves, the way things appear changes, so different meanings are created; thus camera movement is important in defining and creating meaning in shots. The main camera movements are zooming, tracking, panning and tilting.

**Camera speed**
The speed of the camera’s movement can be used to create special effects and enhance meaning, such as slow or fast motion, and the use of freeze-frames (a still image created by stopping the film in the middle of the action).

**Cinematography**
The control and design of the camera work: the operation of the camera and the control of the shot and characters.

**Close-up**
A shot of a person’s head from above the head to the top of the upper chest which fills the whole screen. It can also be used to frame an object at close range.

**Composition**
The composition of film shots is the control of all the elements in a single frame of film; the arrangements and relationship of the visual elements within a frame. Consider how the camera seems to place a frame around the view it has in front of it. The way the elements are placed within this frame is the composition of the shot. The composition of this isolated view or frame is dependent upon the choice of lens, and the placement of items within the frame. The composition also includes the camera angle and movement.
Continuity
The person in charge of making sure that all the relevant details from each scene match each other so as not to disrupt the narrative flow.

Cut
A cut has both utilitarian and aesthetic value in film editing and is the most direct and immediate editing device for introducing new screen information. A cut allows the use of different types of shots without disrupting the action. The direct cut is the most immediate editing device for introducing new screen information. One shot is followed immediately by a cut to another shot. A cut is the splicing together of two pieces of film to:

- maintain continuity (continuous action)
- change scenes (transition)
- insert other relevant material into the film flow

The use of cuts as transitions, rather than the use of dissolves, fades and wipes, can affect the pace of the film.

Dissolve
A gradual transition, or overlap, in which one scene fades out as the other fades in. Both the end of the outgoing shot and the beginning of the incoming shot are briefly seen on the screen simultaneously. In traditional film making the dissolve came to be the accepted technique for indicating substantial geographic leaps, passage of time, a flashback or a dream, or to show what the character is thinking. Dissolves are used to suggest a special relationship between the scenes that dissolve into one another; a relationship closer than one that would be suggested by a fade or cut.

Dolly Shot
The camera moves along with the actors or the acting. The camera is usually on wheels.

Editing uses
The process of joining shots and sequences of film and using special effects to create a single continuous film. It is the arrangement of time, parallel movements and cuts to scenes, transitions of shots. Common transitional devices are fade, dissolve, washout and wipe.

Establishing shot
In popular or ‘dominant’ cinema, the opening sequence is traditionally regarded as an ‘establishing’ shot: a long, wide angle view of an area or open space is given before the camera goes in closer to establish/identify the more specific location of a film story or scene. Later in the film establishing shots may be used to establish the settings for the action to come.

Extreme Long Shot
This shows the landscape of the film or a barely visible character in the distance of a
background.

**Eye level**
This shot occurs when the camera is level with the object or figure; like a normal eye-view of the scene, and suggests reality.

**Fade**
A transition device for moving from one scene or sequence to another in a film. Fades can suggest a passage of time, or a journey, or a new location. The scenes each side of a fade have a special relationship that would not be conveyed by a simple cut. A fade-out occurs when the image on the screen fades to black to end the scene. The scene that follows may suddenly appear, termed a fade-out or cut in transition, giving the feeling of finality and separation to the scene just ending and introducing the new action in a dynamic, attention-getting way. Alternatively, it may gradually fade-in from black, termed a fade-out/fade-in transition giving a slower, more contemplative movement.

**Frame**
A single picture in a strip of film.

**Freeze-frame**
A still image created by stopping the film in the middle of the action so that it appears like a photographic still.

**Final Cut**
The final edited version of the film.

**Key Lighting**
The main source of lighting in a film. This is usually combined with fill lighting and backlighting.

**High angle**
This shot is taken when the camera is above and looking down on the scene or object but not directly overhead. The main effect is to make the object or character look small and lacking in power.

**Lighting**
How the shot is lit for filming. High-key and low-key lighting are terms used for describing the quality of illumination and the intensity of the lighting in the frame. Usually high-key lighting is used to highlight the central subject. High-key lighting has bright, intense illumination. Low-key lighting has the opposite quality. It is more diffuse and shadowy. There is less general illumination in the shot, heavier shadows and a more atmospheric quality. Other effects can be created through use of back lighting where the light source is placed behind the subject to create a darkened effect on the subject, fill lighting where the lights are used to create or remove shadows, spot or pencil lighting which focuses on the subject or side lighting where only half the character’s face or
object is lit and the other half is in shadow.

**Long shot**
A film shot which includes the whole human figure and part of the surrounding environment.

**Low angle**
This shot is taken when the camera is below or looking up at the object or character; suggesting power or dominance. It can also be used for caricature.

**Medium shot**
A film shot which includes half the body and a small part of the background.

**Mise-en-scene**
Every visible element in the frame, how these elements are related to each other and how you see these elements, i.e. how they are filmed. This term refers to all that appears before the camera, including performers, setting, lighting and décor; also includes camera movement and action. The term means “placed in the scene” or “put in the scene” and refers to what is put into the frame, the modification of space. The term encompasses the overall “design” of the film and the mise-en-scene can help the viewer identify a film’s genre and context. When analysing mise-en-scene consider elements such as:

- Setting/the set
- Props
- Costumes, make up and hairstyles
- Coding of colours
- Actors, body language and position in frame (viewer ‘reads’ left to right across the screen)
- Lighting

**Montage**
A French word meaning ‘mounting’ used generally to describe the assemblage of a film through editing or the changing of one image to another. More specifically it is a number of shots edited quickly together in order to form a brief impression of a character, time or place. The term is used to describe a particular method of editing in which images, objects and figures are linked or overlaid in a variety of creative or unexpected ways in order to generate certain affects or ideas. Such a montage sequence in a film summarises a topic or compresses a passage of time into brief symbolic or typical images. Frequently dissolves, fades, superimpositions and wipes are used to link the images.

**Overhead angle**
This shot is achieved when the camera is overhead or directly above the object or scene; shot is taken with the camera facing down. A number of effects can be created: objects or characters looking small, vulnerable, moving scenes look mechanical/predictable; city looks like a maze or ants’ nest and character can appear lost; can follow character or
object at different speed/pace.

**Panning**
A shot in which the camera follows the action from one side of the screen to the other; the camera moves from side to side on its tripod; gives a sense of a wider perspective or shot, the sense of our eyes ‘panning’ across a large scene (hence ‘panorama’).

**Point of view**
In film, the position from which an action or subject is seen.

**Scene**
A space within which a narrative action takes place; it is composed of one or more shots.

**Sequencing**
A series of scenes or shots unified by a shared action or motif; the putting together of a series of shots to form a continuous scene or piece of action. A series of shots can create a particular sequence of the narrative in film. The sequence, or order and presentation of shots, can be used for added effect for meaning, especially the use of flashback, dream sequences, time variations as well as juxtaposition of shots.

**Shot**
A continuously exposed and unedited image of any length. The shot is all that is recorded on film from the point at which the camera begins (“action”) until it stops rolling (“cut”). The choice of lens fitted to the camera determines the shot size or the amount of the scene which is included in the frame. A shot can be filmed from a variety of camera angles, and single frames can be selected and sequenced to create the most meaning.

**Side Lighting**
The main light source comes from one side of the screen.

**Soundtrack**
The soundtrack is basically what we hear in the film. This is an element that cannot be neglected when studying film as it is an audio-visual medium. Sound effects are commonly used to set a scene or support a visual image. The following audio elements are part of the soundtrack of a film:

- dialogue
- silence/no dialogue or sounds
- voices – volume, pitch, pace
- sound cues - how sound can take you over the cut into the next scene (drags shot into the next)
- sound effects
- music
- diegetic or synchronous sound (what we can see/hear that characters can also; sound whose source is identified by the film image)
- non-diegetic or asynchronous sound (sound the characters cannot hear/put in for
the audience only; sound that does not have its source in the film image)

**Storyboard**
A series of framed sketches which are used to outline a sequence. A tool used in planning film production, consisting of comic-strip-like drawings of individual shots or sequences, with descriptions written for each drawing or frame.

**Tilting**
The camera moves up or down to follow moving objects to reveal a scene or object which is too big to fit in one frame.

**Top Lighting**
The main light source comes from above the character.

**Tracking**
The camera moves forward or backward through space, or parallel to the action. This is often done by placing the camera on tracks (“dolly tracks”). The camera seems to flow with the action, has similar movement, or gets ahead or behind the action.

**Under Lighting**
The main light source comes from below the character.

**Undershot**
This shot is taken when the camera is directly beneath the object or figure; suggesting extreme power or danger (e.g. undershot of stampeding cattle, undershot of a train, etc).

**Washout**
An optical transition similar to the fade; but unlike the fade-in, which the image fades to black, in a washout the image suddenly starts to bleach out or to colour, until the screen becomes a frame of white or coloured light. A new scene then follows.

**Wipe**
A transitional device that occurs when one shot moves across the screen from left to right or from right to left and appears to wipe away the preceding shot; usually used to effect a change of scene without a slowing of dramatic pace. A wipe that is achieved by using objects or characters to wipe out a shot or scene is known as a natural wipe.

**Zooming**
The camera is moved towards or away from a particular object; a means of making objects appear closer or further away by use of a lens which enlarges objects. A zoom can sometimes be used for similar effect to a tracking shot.

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