

FILM  
APPRECIATION

# WHAT IS CINEMA ?

- Cinema or motion picture is the art of moving images, a visual medium that tells stories.

# BUT CINEMA IS A LANGUAGE

- Every element of a visual image can carry meaning,
- Visual images can be « read » like other texts,
- The position of elements within the image, the colours used and the lighting can all affect interpretation,
- Camera distance (eg close-up, long shot, etc), camera angle and camera movement all affect meaning,
- The number and order of shots affect meaning.

Introduction  
"SIGNS" (2008),  
Australian short film  
directed by Patrick Hugues  
7 minutes



# "SIGNS"

- This short film relies on actor's expressions and actions, not the dialogue.
- A good story always relies on strong visuals to tell the story.
- When you write a screenplay, always ask yourself:

**« Can I show the information instead of giving it through the use of dialogue? »**

Video 1  
TYPES OF SHOT  
1 minute

# BASIC FILM GRAMMAR

- A **frame** is a single still image, it's like an *alphabet letter*,
- A **shot** is a single continuous recording made by a camera, it's like a *word*,
- A **scene** is a series of related shots, it's like a *sentence*,
- The **transitions** between the scenes (cut, dissolve...) are like *punctuation*,
- A **sequence** is a series of scenes which together tell a part of the story, it's like a *paragraph*.

# RULE OF THIRDS

- Composition rules and conventions are older than cinema and photography,
- Most of them have been used for thousands of years in painting,
- The rule of thirds is a basic composition principle that adds dynamism to your image.



Video 3  
CAMERA MOVEMENTS  
5 minutes

# CAMERA MOVEMENTS

- Camera movements can add dynamism to your shots,
- It is better to use camera movements to reveal new informations,
- However, camera movements can be distracting or even annoying when overused or used without a reason.

Video 2  
RULE OF THIRDS  
2 minutes

# CAMERA ANGLES

- **Low angle** is captured from a camera placed below the actor's eyes, looking up at them. Low angle makes characters look dominant, aggressive, or ominous.



A low angle incorporated in this shot from *Matilda* (1996).  
The purpose is to make the audience share the little girl's perspective.

- In a **high angle**, the camera is above the subject, looking down. This position makes characters look weak, submissive, or frightened. They are also good POVs of an adult looking at a child.



Reserve shot. A high angle is employed to make the little girl appear weak and scared.  
*Matilda* (2006)

Video 4  
180 DEGREE RULE  
2 minutes

# 180 DEGREE RULE

- Set the scene and establish your characters in space in order for the viewer to follow the action,
- Two characters in a scene should always have the same left/right relationship to each other,
- If you don't follow the rule or break it intentionally, it disrupts the scene and disorients the audience.

# ABOUT EDITING: KULESHOV EFFECT



*The Kuleshov effect is a film editing effect demonstrated by Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov in the 1910's and 1920's.*

- We have a close-up of a man then we shows what he sees.
- Let's assume he sees a flower,
- Now we cut back to his reaction to what he sees,
- He smiles...



- What does he look like as a character?...

**... He looks kind. He looks sympathetic.**

- Now let's take the middle piece away and let's replace it by a man falling down.



- What does he look like as a character?...

**... He looks like a bad person.**

- Those 2 examples illustrate the power of editors as storytellers,
- Depending on how shots are assembled, we attach a special meaning or emotion to it,
- In other words, the meaning of each shot is different from the meaning of the shots combined together.

Video 5  
SETTING THE PACE  
2 minutes 30

- Film editing determines pace and structure, it is a vital component to tell stories efficiently,
- Each frame counts: the addition or removal of one frame may break or make a scene. It's like notes for a composer or a musician,

# ABOUT EDITING: ELLIPSIS

- Alfred Hitchcock said: « what is drama but life with the dulls bits cut out »,
- In other words filmmaking is the representation of life with the boring parts eliminated,
- So ellipsis is the omission of a part of a story that can be understood without showing it.
- But it is also the omission of a part of a story for a narrative purpose, such as suspense or mystery
- Remember: don't show everything!

Soundtrack 1  
IMPORTANCE OF SOUND  
6 minutes 30



# IMPORTANCE OF SOUND

- The importance of sound should not be underestimated,
- Moving image soundtracks can have four elements: music, sound effects, voice and silence. All of these contribute to meaning,
- Sound effects are two types: « atmosphere » (ie continuous sound) and « spot effects » (ie short sounds),
- Sound – particularly music – can set the mood of a film and establish its generic identity (eg comedy, thriller),
- Sound can affect not only the way viewers interpret the images but also what they actually think they can see,
- Off-screen sounds can help to create the impression of three-dimensional space,
- Silence can also have a powerful effect on the interpretation of a sequence.

End of "SIGNS" (2008),  
Australian short film  
directed by Patrick Hugues  
4 minutes

# Questions & Answers