

Film Analysis

When we analyze films we use the same methods as when analyzing short stories, however, as films are visual and auditory as well, we must analyze both sound and what we see on the screen (cinematic technique). This means that we still work with:

The Story

- Characterization
- Plot
- Point-of-view
- Narrative technique
- Structure
- Symbols
- Metaphors
- Theme
- Message

But it also means that we must work with the following in our analysis:

Cinematic Technique

- Angles
 - Eye-level: makes the audience feel on the same level as a character in the film
 - Low-angle: makes a person seem big and powerful
 - High-angle: makes a person seem small and weak
- Lines
 - Horizontal lines: illustrates calm
 - Vertical lines: illustrates power and/or grandiosity
 - Diagonal lines: illustrates disorder and/or action
- Framing
 - Close-up: draws attention to a specific thing or illustrates emotions
 - Long shot: shows the entire setting. It may also be used to make characters appear small
 - Medium shot: often used in dialogue so that you can see the body language of the characters
- Camera movement
 - Pan (↔)
 - Tilt (↕)
 - Steady-cam: calm camera movement
 - Hand-held: chaotic and disorderly
- Composition

- Foreground, Middle-ground, Background: the way these are used in relation to each other is often important as it may tell us something about the characters and their relations to each other or their surroundings.
 - Position of characters: says something about their relations.
- Editing
 - Transitions: dissolve (dk: overblænding), fade to black
 - cross-cutting (X)
 - Parallel editing (=). What we see seems to be through the eyes of a specific character
 - Long takes: slow-paced editing signaling calm
 - Short takes: fast-paced editing in intense and/or hectic sequences

- Lighting, color and filters

High-key lighting: brightly lit scenes set a positive mood

Low-key lighting: dark and/or contrast-filled scenes set a negative mood

Color symbolism: all colors have both positive *and* negative symbolic meanings; so analyze the colors in their context (the particular film you are watching)

- Sound

Diegetic sound: sound from the location of the film, so it could be dialogue or music/sounds the characters actually hear

Non-diegetic sound: sound that does not belong to the film's location, so it could be voice-over, sound effects/music that the characters cannot hear

Contrapuntal sound: sound that is in direct contrast to the images of the film (e.g. a happy tune while watching a murder)