Interpreting Film: Cinematic Terms

Shots and Framing

Shot: a single piece of film uninterrupted by cuts.

Establishing Shot: often a long shot or a series of shots that sets the scene and establishes setting, transitioning between locations.

Long Shot (LS): a shot from some distance. If filming a person, the full body is shown. It may show the isolation or vulnerability of the character (also called a Full Shot).

Medium Shot (MS): the most common shot. The camera seems to be a medium distance from the object being filmed. A medium shot shows the person from the waist up. The effect is to ground the story.

Close Up (CU): the image being shot takes up at least 80 percent of the frame.

Extreme Close Up: the image being shot is a part of a whole, such as an eye or a hand.

Mise-en-scène: the arrangement of actors and scenery in a film production. Literally, everything that is visually displayed in the frame.

Camera Angles

Eye Level: a shot taken from a normal height; that is, the character's eye level.

High Angle: the camera is above the subject. This usually has the effect of making the subject look smaller than normal, giving him or her the appearance of being weak, powerless, and trapped.

Low Angle: the camera films subject from below. This usually has the effect of making the subject look larger than normal, and therefore strong, powerful, and threatening.

Camera Movements

Pan: a stationary camera moves from side to side on a horizontal axis.

Tilt: a stationary camera moves up or down along a vertical axis

Zoom: a stationary camera where the lens moves to make an object seem to move closer to or further away from the camera. With this technique, moving into a character is often a personal or revealing movement, while moving away distances or separates the audience from the character.

Dolly/Tracking: the camera is on a track that allows it to move with the action. The term also refers to any camera mounted on a car, truck, or helicopter.

Boom/Crane: the camera is on a crane over the action. This is used to create overhead shots.

Lighting

High Key: the scene is flooded with light, creating a bright and open-looking scene.

Low Key: the scene is flooded with shadows and darkness, creating suspense or suspicion.

Bottom or Side Lighting: direct lighting from below or the side, which often makes the subject appear dangerous or evil.

Front or Back Lighting: soft lighting on the actor's face or from behind gives the appearance of innocence or goodness, or a halo effect.

Editing Techniques

Cut: most common editing technique. Two pieces of film are spliced together to "cut" to another image.

Fade: can be to or from black or white. Fade-in: gets lighter. Fade-out: gets darker.

Flashback: cut or dissolve to action that happened in the past.

Shot-Reverse-Shot: a shot of one subject, then another, then back to the first. It is often used for conversation or reaction shots.

Cross Cutting: cut into action that is happening simultaneously. This technique is also called parallel editing. It can create tension or suspense and can form a connection between scenes.

Eye-Line Match: cut to an object, then to a person. This technique shows what a person seems to be looking at and can reveal a character's thoughts.

Sound

Diegetic: sound that could logically be heard by the characters in the film.

Non-Diegetic: sound that cannot be heard by the characters but is designed for audience reaction only. An example might be ominous music for foreshadowing.

Recognizing Shots and Conventions in Film

Name:_____

<u>Part 1</u>
Brief film clips will be played to highlight certain film techniques. Some clips will contain more than one film technique, and I will pause the clip accordingly after each film technique is displayed so you have a moment to consider what has just been seen. Please write the appropriate technique next to the corresponding question number. Use your film terms packet if needed.

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10.

<u>Part 2</u> (use your film terms packet if needed)

1. What is the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic?

2. What is mise en scène?

3. Why is editing so important in films? (Use at least five terms from your packet to answer this question)