

Film Studies

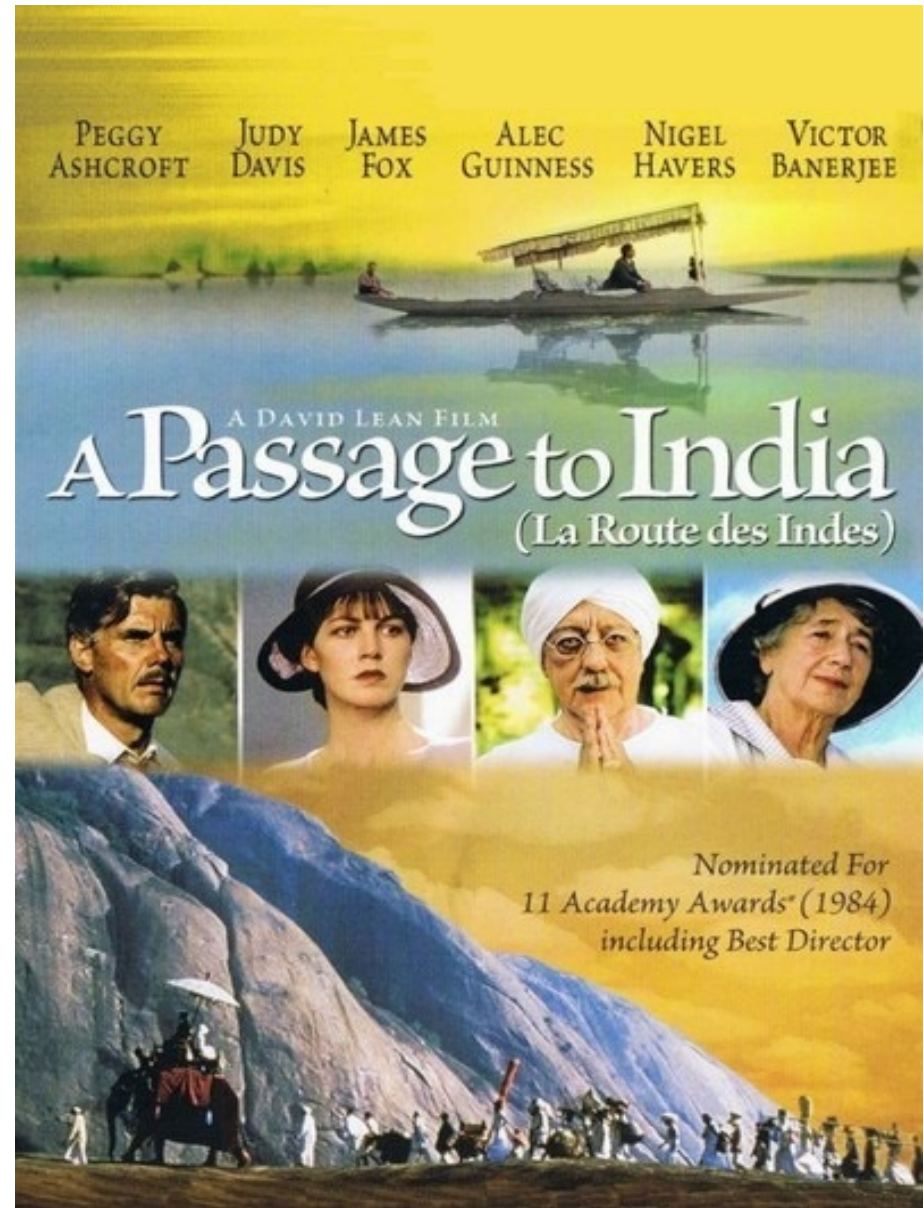
Master 2 Littérature et Civilisation

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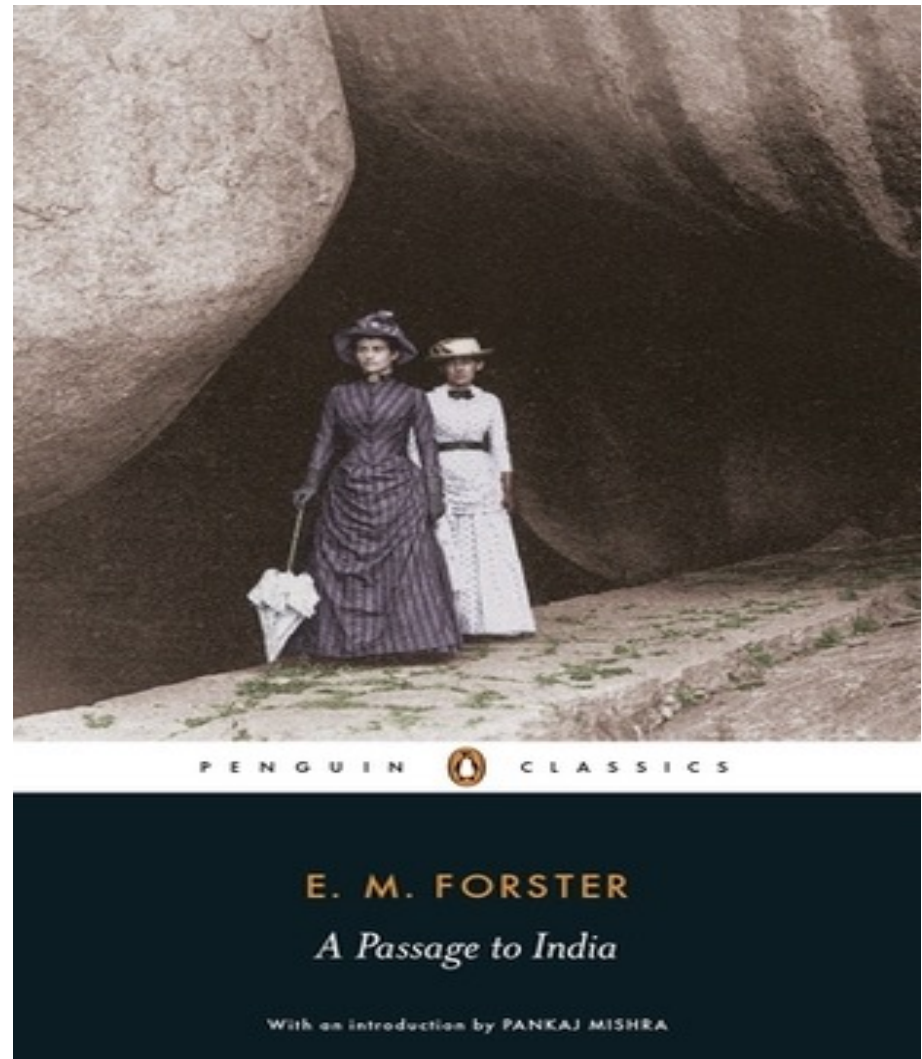
- Why see the film if you've read the book?
- Why adapt a novel as film?
- A great number of movies are based on literature.
- John Harrington: « 1/3 of all films ever made are based on literature. »
- Dudley Andrew: « 1/2 of all films ever made are based on literature. »
- Movies like *A Passage to India* (1984) can reach greater audience in a few weeks than the book has enjoyed since its publication.
- A successful movie adaptation can catapult a book high up on the bestseller list.

- Consider:
- How a film is different from the original novel?
- What different media bring to a work?
- How filming a novel necessitates changes both positive and negative?
- How a film is different from a novel, a photograph or still image, or a live theatre performance.

India 1920, during the Indian British rule, Dr. Aziz H. Ahmed was born and brought up in India. He is proficient in English, and wears Western style clothing. He meets an old lady, Mrs. Moore, at a mosque, who asks him to accompany her and her companion, Adela Quested, for sight-seeing around some caves. Thereafter the organized life of Aziz is turned upside down when Adela accuses him of molesting her in a cave. Aziz is arrested and brought before the courts, where he learns that the entire British administration is against him, and would like to see him found guilty and punished severely, to teach all native Indians what it means to molest a British citizen. Aziz is all set to witness the "fairness" of the British system, whose unofficial motto is "guilty until proved innocent."



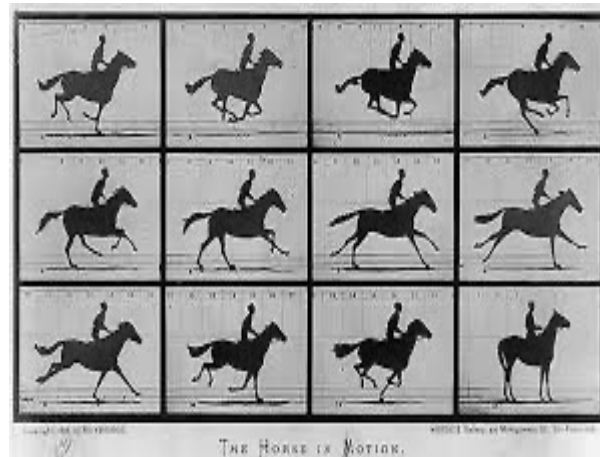
n 1957, EM Forster, looking back in old age, wrote that the late-empire world of *A Passage to India* "no longer exists, either politically or socially". Today, approaching 100 years after its composition, the novel is probably as "dated" as ever. Yet – because Forster's concern is the forging of a relationship between a British schoolteacher and a Muslim doctor, reflecting the larger tragedy of imperialism – *A Passage to India* stands as a strangely timeless achievement, one of the great novels of the 20th century.



Introduction to Film Studies

Definitions

Film: also called movie or motion picture is a medium used to simulate experiences that communicate ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings and beauty by means of recorded or programmed moving images along with other sensory stimulations.

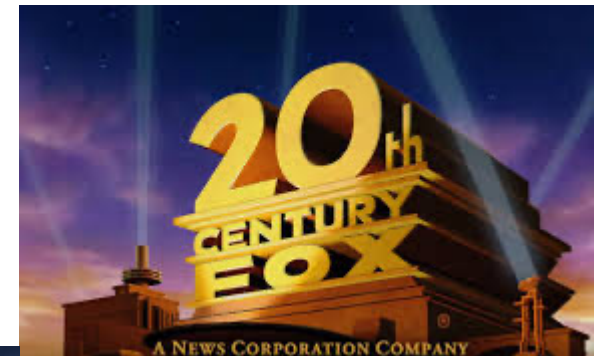


Cinema: short for cinematography is often used to refer to filmmaking and film industry and to the artform that is the result of it.



The film industry or motion picture industry, comprises the technological and commercial institutions of filmmaking, i.e., film production companies, film studios, cinematography, animation, film production, screenwriting, pre-production, post production, film festivals, distribution and actors, film directors and other film crew personnel.

film production companies: Warner Bros, Sony Picture, Motion Picture Group, Walt Disney Studios, Universal Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures.



Film studies is an academic discipline that deals with various theoretical, historical, and critical approaches to **films**. **Film studies** is less concerned with advancing proficiency in **film** production than it is with exploring the narrative, artistic, cultural, economic, and political implications of the **cinema**.

Film theory

explores the essence of cinema and provides conceptual frameworks for understanding film's relationship to reality, the other arts, individual viewers and society at large. This term is not to be confused with general film criticism, which may however draw upon ideas from film theory.

Film Criticism

Film criticism is the analysis and evaluation of films and the film medium. The concept is often used interchangeably with that of film reviews. A film review implies a recommendation aimed at consumers, however not all film criticism takes the form of reviews.

In general, film criticism can be divided into two categories:

journalistic criticism which appears regularly in newspapers, magazines and other popular mass-media outlets; and academic criticism by film scholars who are informed by film theory and are published in academic journals.

Academic film criticism rarely takes the form of a review; instead it is more likely to **analyse** the film and its place within the history of its genre, or the whole of film history.

Film analysis: breaks down film into its main component parts to better understand how it works.

Alfred Hitchcock: **critical faculty**.

Film studies enables to go beyond the passive viewing of the story (content) and actively read the films' form (how the content of the film is expressed).

Film form: the overall pattern of relationships among elements in the film: narrative elements, cinematographic elements, theatrical elements, editing...

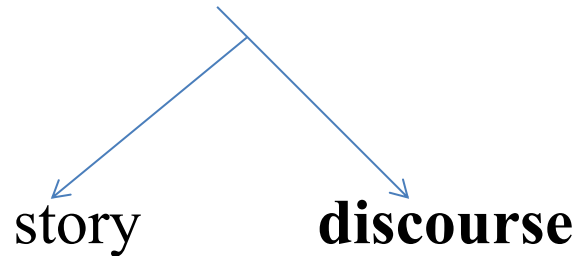
The Art of Fiction Film

- Film is an art. It is considered the most recent art form standing alongside literature, theatre, painting, music, and photography (1890s)
- **The Art of storytelling**

Seymour Chatman. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978)

Narratology = all the shared features of storytelling, no matter what the medium may be: a speech, a written text, a movie or a dance.

Narratology



(the what of the narrative)

plot, character, setting, and other
elements of a story's « content »

(the how of the narrative)

the means by which a story is
communicated.

A novel and a film might share the same story but they may vary widely in their literary forms of discourse.

Film terminology and cinematic effects



CINEMATOGRAPHY

“

Cinematography is a writing with images in mouvement and with sounds.

”

The Elements of Film Discourse

- Lighting
- Color
- Framing
- Motion
- Sound
- Transitions
- Acting

Film terminology and cinematic effects

- A poet uses a particular rhythm scheme or metaphor on purpose: to create a specific effect on the reader.
- Like a poet, a filmmaker uses various devices and techniques for a desired effect.
- When a director uses a particular lighting choice or camera angle, for example, he/ she may be trying to say something about the character or situation.

Cinematic techniques

- **The shot:**
- This is the building block of all filmmaking.

Whenever you hear someone say, "Hey, did you see that shot in The Godfather?" he/she is talking about a single, uninterrupted piece of film.

- the shot is the image that is seen on-screen until it is replaced by another image through some type of editing technique.
- If the camera moves while still filming, but without that momentary break, then you are still watching just the one shot.
- While watching a film you notice that moment of black when the shot changes. While the black is not actually inserted into the film, it seems to be there for just a split second.

- **Framing**

One of the first decisions that a director has to make is how the object will be positioned within the shot, or how much of the frame of the movie screen the object will occupy.

The three main framing types are the long shot, the close-up, and the medium shot.

A director will choose to use a given type of shot in order to achieve a particular effect.

- **Long Shot**

In a long shot, the object on the screen appears small or appears to be seen from some distance away. If a person is shown, then generally you will see his or her entire body but you do not see his facial expressions.



This type of shot can establish the scene, by showing, for example, the Manhattan skyline, so that the viewer knows where the film will take place



It can also serve to show distance or separation between characters in a way that other shots cannot, or to show that a character is integrated with his or her surroundings



The long shot gives the viewer a sense of time and place, but objects and characters may seem unclear or indistinct because of the distance and lack of detail. It also allows the viewer to decide where to look since there is so much on the screen to see. The long shot can be seen as the opposite of the close-up.



Close-up or Close Shot

The object or subject takes up nearly 80 percent of the screen space and therefore appears to be very large. This shot can be used by a filmmaker to direct the viewer's attention to a crucial clue in a detective story, to emphasize a facial expression or gesture, or, perhaps, to show the single tear dropping off the character's cheek as he delivers his deathbed speech.



Close-up or Close Shot



Close-up or Close Shot



Close-up or Close Shot

- The close-up forces the viewer to look at only what the director intended, as opposed to the long shot, which allows for at least some choice on the part of the viewer. Interesting, too, with a close-up is what is missing, or excluded from the scene. We are not allowed to see the entire scene, so we become deprived for a time of the overall context.
- The close-up is uniquely cinematic. Theatergoers, in contrast, are not allowed up onstage to see the sly wink or the trembling hands. It is one of the most powerful tools a filmmaker has: it is intimate and revealing.

Medium Shot

A medium shot (between a long and a close shot) is probably the most common and most naturalistic of the three types, since it is also the most common in our real lives. Generally we see each other in medium shots because of personal space distances. Unlike the long and close shots, the medium shot does not necessarily communicate much in the way of cinematic effect, and it could best be called a sort of "neutral shot."



Medium Shot



- Most television shows are framed almost entirely by using medium shots because they are unobtrusive and comfortable; they do not tend to call attention to themselves.
- The medium shot can show more setting and context than a close-up can, though it lacks the close-up's detail, and it brings the viewer closer to the subject than the long shot does, though it cannot show the distance and relationships between characters, or between characters and settings, in quite the same way.

There are almost unlimited variations on these framing choices. There is an extreme close-up, and a "deep-focus shot," where, in a single shot, one object is shown in a close-up while others in the background are shown in a long shot



- Classic Hollywood framing normally suggests that a director establish the scene with a long shot, move into a medium shot, and only then use a close-up. This has a natural kind of feel to it: as an audience member you can imagine getting closer and closer to the subject.
- Interesting things occur, however, when a director intentionally breaks with this convention for whatever ideas that he or she may have.

Focus : film directors use varying degrees of focus/ ‘play’ with the focus in different ways in order to communicate something to the audience.



- **Soft focus: A director can film his/ her subject slightly out of focus which creates a texture called soft focus.**
- **It is common to see soft focus in romantic films to help create a lighter mood.**



But it can also be used to blur an image slightly in order to communicate uncertainty. Example: many scenes with the Judy/ Madleine character in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* are shot with a soft focus since her identity and motives are always in question.



- **Rack focus**

A director uses a rack focus to force viewers to direct their attention where he/she wants them to look.

A director can use this technique to bring either the foreground or the background suddenly into focus. (example James Bond in *Casino Royale*)



Deep focus: Deep focus refers to having everything in the frame, even the background in focus at the same time, as opposed to having only the people and things in the foreground in focus. The deep focus technique requires the cinematographer to combine lighting, composition, and type of camera lens to produce the desired effect.

Some critics argue that deep focus gives a greater sense of reality, since in real life we can choose what to look at, we are not often forced in and out of focus.

Even if it is not more realistic than normal focus, a director using the deep focus concept can literally fill his/her frame with information and create interesting compositions.



- The most significant contribution of *Citizen Kane* (1941) by Orson Welles to cinematography came from the use of the technique of deep focus.
- Effectively manipulating the mise-en-scène for deep focus actively engages the whole space of the frame without leaving the viewer confused. Deep focus is most effective in scenes that depict Kane's loss of control and his personal isolation because it gives the audience a clear view of the space Kane commands as well as the space over which he has no power. Gregg Toland, the cinematographer Welles chose for *Citizen Kane*, had used the technique in an earlier film he had worked on, *The Long Voyage Home*, but *Citizen Kane* marked the first time it was used so extensively or effectively. *Citizen Kane* introduced Hollywood to the creative potential of other cinematic techniques as well.

- Angles:

Another consideration that the director must take into account is where the camera will be placed in relation to the subject.

He/she may choose to use a low, high, eye-level, or Dutch angle.

Low angle/low-angle shot:
the camera is below the
subject. How do you look
when viewed through that
camera below you?

Huge, powerful,
dominating, and in control.
Characters shot with a low
angle are often the more
powerful ones in the film.



High angle/high-angle shot:
the camera is above the
subject.

How do you look through
the camera?

Small, weak, powerless or
trapped. Characters
presented with a high-
angle shot in films are the
ones who appear a little
weaker and less in control.



Eye level shot

Shot at eye-level the subject of the shot meets the camera, and thus the viewer, "eye to eye" or on "equal terms". Unlike the high-angle shot, which makes the subject appear smaller or weaker or the low-angle shot, which makes the subject appear bigger or more dominant, the eye-level shot is a fairly neutral shot as far as impact and emotion.

Characters are on an even balance with this type of angle.

If a director uses an eye-level shot of a character after setting him/her up with a high angle shots, the director may be commenting on the growing strength or confidence of this character.



Dutch angle: to create a Dutch angle, the camera tilts slightly, so the image appears sideways, to one extent or another, within the frame.

This type of angle is often used in horror or gangster films to show an evil character or a dangerous situation.

A Dutch angle can create tension or peculiarity in an otherwise static or normal situation, thus implying danger or moral uncertainty.



Camera movement

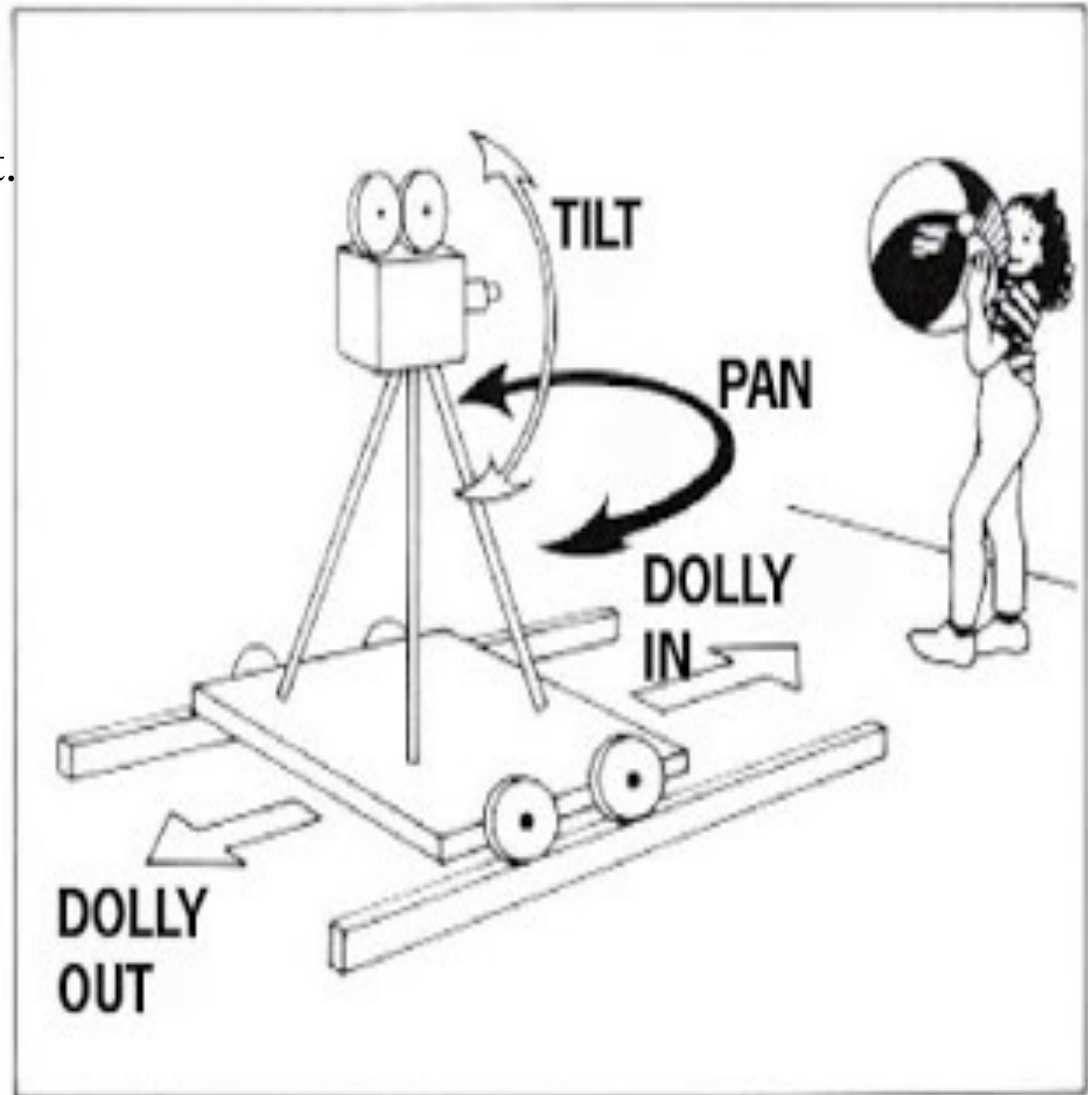
There are a number of ways that a camera can move while making a shot.

Pan

Tilt

Zoom

Tracking or Dolly shots



Camera Movement

Track



Zoom



Pan



Tilt



- **Pan:** technically the camera does not move, only the camera's head pivots along the horizontal axis to follow the action. This movement is called a pan.
- It is often used in films to introduce the setting.
- It is also often used from the point of view of characters as they take in their surroundings or situations.
- **Tilt:** technically as with the pan the camera does not move and tilts along the vertical axis.
- Tilt is an effective way to communicate distance, size and strength.

- **Zoom:** When the camera zooms, the focal length of the lens changes, thus making the object appear to move closer or further away. The zoom is a way to direct the audience's attention to a detail that the director does not want to miss.
- **Tracking or dolly shot:** when the camera moves while following the action, the shot is called a tracking or dolly shot. This is by far the most cinematic of all these movements since it can enter and actually move us through the imaginative space of the film in the way that the pan and the tilt cannot because they are stationary movements , more reminiscent of watching a staged play. We can now go with the action , become part of it , or even go behind it. The camera may be on a truck, a helicopter or even the operators' hands.

Lighting

- The principle source of light on a movie set is called the « key light». And other lights balance, soften, and shade the key light.
- Two general descriptors of film lighting are « low-key lighting » and « high-key lighting », terms which are used to characterize the lighting of an overall scene.
- Two others: « side-bottom lighting » and « front lighting » are used primarily on actors and actresses to editorialize on some aspect of their characters.

Lighting

Low-key lighting

Its chief characteristics are its darkness, shadows, and patches of bright key light. Obviously, low key lighting can create moods of suspicion, mystery and danger. This type of lighting is great for horror films, film noir, and detective movies because things can be hidden or concealed in the depth of shadows.

Low-key lighting in film Inception



High-key lighting:

High-key lighting in film Shawshank Redemption



- this type type of lighting is distinguished by its brightness, openness and lack of shadows between light and dark. Romantic comedies, musicals and costumed dramas are often filmed with high key lighting, characters and situations are seen without misunderstanding or threat.



High-Key



Low-Key

Neutral lighting:

Every scene must be high- or low-key, a scene could be sort of average, or lacking in much to distinguish its lighting. When the lighting is balanced throughout the shot, it is called « neutral ». Most TV programmes are shot with this type in mind.



Bottom/ Side lighting:

- the light illuminates only parts of the character's face and the shadows distort it so he/she looks a little scary. This type of lighting has the effect of creating characters that may be evil, are hiding something, are morally ambiguous, or are conflicted in some way.



Front Lighting:

- light shines across the character's face so that no shadows appear. This effect is called front lighting. It is often used to show innocence and openness. A character who is honest with nothing to hide will often be shot this way-the hero or heroine in particular.



Sound

- Sound in film is as important as the visual image in its ability to create effect on a viewer. A violin can make us sad during the deathbed speech, a gunshot can make us jump out of our seats, and a voice-over narration help us follow the story. There are many ways to classify sound in film- dialogue, music, sound effects- and there are various ways to analyse sound in film- pitch- direction- whether its on-screen or off-screen.

The following are three important categories:

- **Diegetic sound:** any sound that could logically be heard by a character within the movie environment: if the character speaks or coughs; this type includes background noise, traffic, dialogue between characters. The audience and the characters hear roughly the same thing.

- **Nondiagetic sound:**

Any sound that is intended only for the audience and is not part of the environment of the film. Oftentimes this means music, but it can also take voice-over narration.

- **Internal Diegetic Sound:**

When the character is talking to himself or remembering sounds he heard before.

What's the point in making these three distinctions between types of sounds?

Sometimes the director-like a writer-wants to give information or clues directly to his audience without giving that information to the characters, and it is important to know how and when the director is doing this.

Through the varying use of diegetic and nondiegetic sound, the director can create suspense , irony...etc.

The sound in film acts as a sort of Greek chorus to catch the audience up with the story.

