UNIT 1 FOUNDATION

UNIT INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 you will learn all the foundational understandings you need for the rest of the Film, Television & New Media course. What you learn in Unit 1 will be useful to you for your own productions, and also for the critical responses you make to television, film and new media products.

The building blocks for your productions, and of all media products, are the signs, codes and conventions of media language. Once you have mastered these, you can make your audience laugh or cry, and keep them on the edge of their seats. The best way to learn this is to watch what others have done and make a detailed study.

All media, including your own, come about through institutional practices. Whether it is your own little production company of one, a small group or a large multi-national media corporation, there are certain routine practices undertaken. There are also certain regulations and safety procedures that must be complied with.

Using technology to communicate is what defines the media. You will learn how technology has evolved, making media more and more central to our lives. At the same time, technology gives us new ways to interact with the media.

By the end of Unit 1, you will have made your own production project and closely analysed a significant production work by another.

AREAS OF STUDY

Languages: How do signs and symbols, codes and conventions create meaning?

Institutions: How are institutional practices influenced by social, political and economic factors?

Technologies: How are tools and associated processes used to create meaning?

2

Language codes and conventions of moving-image media

ABOUT LANGUAGE CODES AND CONVENTIONS

The rules of spoken or written language cannot be used to understand the sound effects or visual images in movies and video games. All that unites these modes is that they are all acts of communication. This uniting factor provides a starting point for analysis. The study of visual language can be helped by using some of the ideas from written communication. However, there is a need for a whole new way of investigating visual communication.

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Figure 2.1 The universal film leader was a set length of film that was attached to the start of a film reel. It was used to help thread the projector, without damaging the theatrical film. The leader also allowed the projector to run up and reach correct speed. With modern digital projection, the film leader is no longer needed. However, it survives as a tradition and convention.

Signs, codes and conventions

The study of systems of signs and symbols is called **semiotics**. At the most basic level, communication takes place through **signs**: gestures, sounds, grunts and drawn images. It is possible to analyse at this level, although it reduces media language to tiny particles of communication. However, the reduction to signs does allow all print, sound and visual aspects of media communication to be studied together.

In semiotics there are generally agreed to be three areas of study:

1 signs – the smallest unit of communication
2 codes and conventions – ways in which signs are put together
3 culture – the cultural meanings that are given to signs and codes.

Signs

All communication can be seen as messages created out of signs. A sign can be a smile, a rude hand gesture, a photograph, a laugh or a letter of the alphabet. The audience for a message derives meaning from the message by interpreting the signs.

Signs refer to something other than themselves. They work as pointers or directions, guiding the audience towards thinking in a certain way. For example, the collection of marks on a page that is the word 'apple' bears no resemblance to an actual apple. All the marks do is point us in the direction of thinking about a real apple. While a photograph does bear a resemblance to the object it signifies, it is not the object itself; therefore, a photograph is only directing us to think the thought, in the same way as letters on a page do.

The meaning of a sign depends on its cultural **context**. Communications professor John Fiske gives the example of an ox. In an English-speaking context, an ox may suggest a beast of burden or something served between two buns with French fries. For a Hindu in India, where killing this sacred animal can be punishable by a jail term, the word ox carries a very different meaning.

Types of signs

Terms defining or relating to signs include the following:

- **Signifiers** are the signs. For example, the word 'apple' is a signifier. What is signified are the many meanings of 'apple' – some of these could include associations such as primary school teachers and education systems, or the poisoned apple from the fairytale *Snow White*. Signifiers can also be called 'connotations' (see below).
- **Icons** are signs that resemble the object they refer to. Photographs are icons because they are images of things that exist. However, icons can also be words. Onomatopoeia works like an icon because it makes language sound like the thing it signifies. For example, the word 'crash' sounds like the noise it refers to.
- **Symbols** are signs that do not resemble the thing they refer to. They derive their meaning from associations built up over generations of habitual use. The olive branch representing peace, or the cross representing Christianity, are both easily recognised symbols with roots in antiquity.

Denotation and connotation

Creating meaning around a sign is achieved through denotation and connotation.

- **Denotation** is the term given to the naming and describing level of a sign. This level defines or denotes what the sign refers to. For example, the word 'dove' denotes a small bird from the same family as the pigeon.
- **Connotation** refers to the associated thoughts that any particular sign brings to mind. These might be anything connected, suggested or implied by the sign. For example, a white dove brings to mind the concept of peace, while a turtledove is connected with the imagery of love.

Polysemy refers to the capacity of all signs to be 'many signed' (polysemous); that is, to have more than one meaning. A dictionary is a good place to discover this. The average number of meanings for a single word (or sign) in English is four to five. The word 'range' is one of the most polysemous as it has 17 different meanings. Within a particular culture, signs are not usually regarded as endlessly polysemous. The variations that occur are within limits set by the social and cultural context.

Alamy Stock Photo/Wing Lun Leung

Figure 2.2 The Mercedes is a powerful sign with strong associations. Connected with it are connotations of wealth, luxury and status. But the Mercedes is polysemous. It can mean a range of other things to different people. For some, it could also signify unfairness, greed and ruthlessness. In parts of Africa, for example, a black Mercedes is often associated with corruption and violence. However, the variations of meaning are not endless – they deviate within limits.

Codes

Codes are systems of signs put together (usually in sequence) to create meaning. As with a spy code, a set of rules governs the way the code is assembled and the linkages that will be made. Members of the community who use the code consent to the rules, and in this way make sense of the communication. Codes are therefore a product of the social and cultural context.

Writing is a code that allows us to represent thoughts on paper. Carefully schooled agreement among users allows the code to be understood. In the same way, sequences of images in a television drama are a code that allows us to participate in the narrative genre.

Types of codes

Code systems may be classified as either technical or symbolic.

- **Technical codes** are codes of the craft or the profession. They are technical in the sense of being techniques of construction. Technical codes include camera techniques, journalistic techniques and editing techniques.
- **Symbolic codes** are systems of signs that are embedded within the text itself. These signs have strong associative or connotative meanings connected with them. Symbolic codes include actors' clothing and body language.

Courtesy Matchbox Pictures

Figure 2.3 Creator Benjamin Law with the cast of *The Family Law* (2016–). The television comedy is loosely based on his own teenage years, starring Tristan Ngo as the partly fictionalised young Benjamin Law. It is set in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Technical codes of production are those based on the technology – in this case, the camera taking the shot and the choice of angle, framing, etc. Symbolic codes are those in the image itself, including costume, setting, body language, etc.

2.1.1
Codes

Table 1.1 lists the technical and symbolic codes of the media.

Table 1.1 The technical and symbolic codes of the main media forms. Each media form/medium favours particular codes, and this may affect the final representation.

MEDIA	TECHNICAL CODES	SYMBOLIC CODES
Television, film, photographs, computer-based multimedia (images)	- framing - composition - shot type - camera angle - lighting - special effects - editing - camera movement - sound volume - sound fades and cuts - sound layering - written (structural; e.g. division into parts, words on the screen such as 'later') - computer screen design - computer interactivity - computer sequencing - computer navigation	- symbolic objects - set design - actors' body language - actors' appearance - lighting - dialogue - sound effects - music - choice of language
Radio, CDs, etc.	- fades and cuts - sound volume - sound layers	- dialogue - music - sound effects - silence
Newspapers, magazines, computer-based multimedia (text), etc.	- sentence construction - headlines, etc. - columns - page design - story placement - layout (also refer to the codes for photographs)	- choice of emotive words - symbolic typefaces or fonts (e.g. Medieval) (also refer to the codes for photographs)

Media encoding and decoding

As with all systems of signs, coded communications must be constructed (encoded) by the sender and then interpreted (decoded) by the receiver.

- **Encoding** refers to the process of making codes. Producers of texts encode their messages using systems of signs. Institutional issues influence this process.

- **Decoding** refers to the reading of coded messages by the receiver. Issues related to audience have an impact on this process.

Conventions

Conventions are habits or accepted ways of doing things. Through repeated experiences, often over generations, audiences become familiar with the procedures of conventions.

The media have hundreds of conventions. Each of them has been built up over so many years that the audience believes they are just common sense. In television and film, for example, a fade to black may indicate the passing of time. Had Hollywood developed differently, it could just as easily have been a fade to white (which instead tends to suggest death or a dream).

Conventions operate by general agreement with the audience. They are therefore the social and cultural component of signs and codes.

Binary oppositions

Thinking in terms of oppositions (masculine/feminine, black/white, active/passive, good/bad, rich/poor) is very human. Often we have to remind ourselves that things are not always black and white, but rather many shades of grey. **Binary oppositions** are an outcome of our way of communicating through signs, codes and conventions. Pairing opposites has an interesting effect on our thinking about power. Educators Emma and Sophie Robinson say oppositions have the effect of including or excluding individuals or social groups.

Binary opposites are not usually equal to each other. More often they are locked in a power struggle for dominance. For example, the gender opposites of male and female have been engaged in a 'battle of the sexes' since time immemorial.

Commutation

The meaning of a sign, code or convention can often be discovered by **commuting** it into something else. Movement, transfer or exchange of a code can result in vastly different meanings. For example, if the white clothes of the traditional melodrama hero were commuted to black, there would be a change in meaning. This change communicates to us the cultural significance of white clothes.

Alamy Stock Photo/AF Archive

Figure 2.4 In *Junior* (1994), Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes pregnant during a medical experiment. 'My body, my choice,' says Schwarzenegger when advised to end the pregnancy. The humour in this movie comes from the incongruence of this biological commutation. It illustrates how, even today, male and female roles remain divided.

Meaning

Meaning derives from the cultural and social context just as much as it does from the text. Indonesian shadow theatre would have little meaning to a western audience because they do not have access to the cultural context.

Even within the same culture, different meanings can be read into one text. A text provides information–rich sequences that are rather like building blocks. Most people would use the blocks to build understandings that look similar, but each person's ideas would be a little different. Life experiences, gender, race or class may all be factors influencing a person's 'construction'. Some people could build quite unusual structures, yet still be using the same set of building blocks. In the same way, people make different interpretations of the blocks of meaning that are media texts.
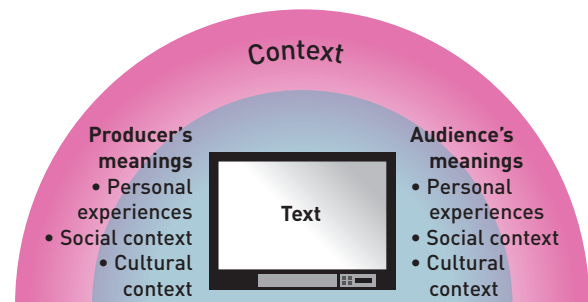

Figure 2.5 A text (e.g. a television program) exists within a social and cultural context. Producers and audiences within these contexts each contribute to the meaning of the text. Certain influences affect the producers, and the audience is subject to a range of other influences. Put simply, meaning is made on both sides of the text.

2.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Collect images (or words) you believe are clearly more polysemous than most. The meaning of these signs will depend on context. You will be able to change the meaning to some degree by changing the context.
    Construct a numbered sequence of the images.
    Explain the range of potential meanings that you can see. Give additional information about each, clarifying how the context could alter the meaning.
    Construct captions to anchor the meaning to a particular interpretation you wish the audience to make for each image.
    Explain the totality of the effect and give additional information about the connotations of each individual image.
    Discuss the results with your class.
2   Construct a list of well-known visual media conventions and provide additional information about their usual meanings. Illustrate each convention using an example from a well-known film or television program. Examples of conventions might include cuts, fades, wipes, split screens and dissolves.
3   Construct a script for a 10–20 second video sequence that relies on the powerful connotative effect of selected images to present an emotional appeal. The topic can be of your own choice. Choosing a topic that allows you to take a strong view about something may make it easier to think of ways to manipulate associations and images. For example, emotive images are readily available for topics dealing with environmental issues. Advertisements are another suitable choice.

Explain the nature of the target audience you have in mind. Clarify by giving two examples of the kind of audience member who represents that group.

Explain the connotative effect you hope to achieve on your target audience with each of your chosen shots.

4   Title sequences of movies and television programs are often rich in meaningful signs, as producers show the key elements of the program and the audience to which they are appealing. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

EXPLAIN	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Explain the basic sequence of images in the title sequence. Give information about its general style and the use of text and music. Illustrate the explanation with some examples of key scenes in the sequence.	Analyse key elements of the sequence, examining individual scenes and considering the use of accepted codes and conventions. Analyse the strengths and limitations of the title sequence using audience appeal as criteria.	Appraise meanings communicated to the audience about the show, and interpret the signs, codes and conventions to make a judgement about the impact of the sequence. Appraise the significance and status of the title sequence, drawing conclusions about its worth compared to other iconic title sequences you know of.

GENRES AND CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Genres (from a French word meaning 'type, classification or category') are repeated sets of codes and conventions. In the media, genres are ways of categorising texts according to the characteristics they share. For example, similar plot lines, characters or settings in different films suggest they belong to the same genre. The habitual use of genre conventions tends to mean their structure stays the same – at least for as long as they are a useful way of doing things. Consequently, they have predictable patterns.

However, unlike the clear classification systems of biology (for instance), genre classification is vague and blurry. Boundaries between genres are not strictly defined. Hybrid texts change those boundaries all the time. Film genre specialist Stephen Neale has argued that each new text extends or changes the genre by adding something new or altering one of the conventions. In this way, says communications academic John Hartley, the creation of just one Western film changes the whole genre.

Genres are based on shared knowledge held by the producers and the audiences. Genres are a means of selecting and constructing a certain view of the world. As such, they are closely related to audience 'reading' practices. An important feature of all genres is their tendency to progress in stages. For example, the narrative genre (defined below) typically begins with an orientation stage before moving to a complications stage, possibly an evaluation stage and, finally, a resolution stage.

Figure 2.6 Genres are made up of codes and conventions, as well as the expectations of the producer and the audience. The relationship among these factors is circular. A change in audience expectation or interpretation can mean the need for a genre change. Producer experimentation may meet audience approval and therefore change a genre.

Judy Horacek/Jenny Darling Associates Literary Agents

Larger genres

Broad categories of genre are based on whether texts are fiction or nonfiction, and whether or not they use story techniques. The large genres are as follows:

- **Narrative genres**. These use storytelling codes and conventions such as plot, character and setting. They are fictional or literary genres. The narrative genre includes most Hollywood movies.
- **Report genres.** These are based on the retelling of factual information but can use aspects of narrative as they relate events. News stories fall within the report genre.
- **Exposition or expository genres.** These aim to convince or argue a point of view. Documentaries and newspaper feature articles are regarded as expositions.
- **Non-narrative genres.** These are genres that do not tell stories. For instance, a single-frame newspaper cartoon does not have any plot development and so is a non-narrative text. Music videos that don't rely on a story and use jumbled imagery are another example.

Smaller genres

Most people use the smaller categories of genre when they think of genre texts. These may be divided into the following:

- **Specific genres.** There are many well-known media genres such as the horror movie, the newspaper feature article, the situation comedy (sitcom) and so on. Each of these will fit into one or other of the larger categories.
- **Subgenres.** Genres are often divided into subgenres. For example, the horror film genre encompasses at least five subgenres – slasher, supernatural and so on.

Features of genres

Genres have the following characteristics.

Genres have a step-by-step structure

Genres have a relatively predictable structure of stages that follow one another in a sequence. In the narrative genre, the Hollywood formula for musicals was said to be 'boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl'. This is an example of the familiar narrative structure of orientation, complication and resolution.

Audiences can usually identify genres because they have recognisable features and step-by-step structures. Audience enjoyment of them is often derived from the familiarity of repetition, with just enough variation to add 'spice'.

Genres are a development of the cultural context

In a particular culture, people get used to interacting in certain ways. For example, the rituals of the traditional Maori greeting developed out of the habitual interactions of that culture. Within a culture, people like hearing stories with familiar subject matter. In Japan, a favourite genre is the samurai story; respect, loyalty and tradition are important to this genre.

The values and beliefs of a culture will affect the types of stories it prefers. For example, western culture generally favours stories in which good triumphs over evil. There is little demand for stories in which evil is rewarded or good and evil meet with random consequences. These preferences lead the audience to expect particular characters and familiar plots. The interest lies in the twists and turns along the way to resolution.

Particular communities and countries favour certain genres. For example, the Australian cultural context appears to have been favourable to the development of the television soap opera. Australian soaps are now shown around the world.

Genres can change

Genres change at about the same pace as the overall culture. Being closely tied to the culture, they reveal the concerns of the time as well as who has most power in that culture. For example, some 19th-century British novels, mostly written by women, portray a class-based society that denied women access to power. This is shown in the 1995 movie of Jane Austen's novel *Sense and Sensibility.*

Genres are changing relatively quickly at the moment. Technology has brought about a rapid transformation in culture, changing previously accepted ways of doing things. As genres are ways of doing things, they too are changing.

Multigeneric or hybrid texts

Many texts 'mix and match' a range of genres to suit new purposes created by a changing society. For example, television programs such as some

modern crime dramas combine elements of the soap opera in the format. Documentaries, often regarded as belonging to the larger exposition genre, can also display features of the report genre. Docudrama combines both genres with the storytelling features of the narrative genre.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the way in which any one text is woven into the whole culture and operates as a link to many other texts. It is also a reading practice carried out by audiences. The ability of the audience to use their familiarity with other texts is a skill built up as cultural knowledge develops. By drawing on references to other texts, audiences are able to derive more complex and enjoyable meanings.

The animated television sitcom *The Simpsons* is an obvious example of a text that uses intertextuality to maximum effect. When young children watch the program, they are largely unaware of the hundreds of in-jokes and references to other television programs, movies and books. As they become teenagers, more of these references become apparent and so they derive more enjoyment from watching the program. For adults watching with their families, this effect is often greater still, affording them extra pleasure when they watch the show.

Types of intertextuality

The following are types of intertextuality, according to John Hartley.

- **Genre relationships.** Other texts within a genre that the audience has seen can be used as a reference point to help understand and predict a new text.
- **Character and actor relationships.** Well-known actors or characters provide a link to other texts and a sense of familiarity.
- **Direct-quote relationships.** Sometimes a text makes a direct quote from another text, using it in some new way. This kind of 'recycling' is common in music videos and in television comedies such as *The Simpsons*.
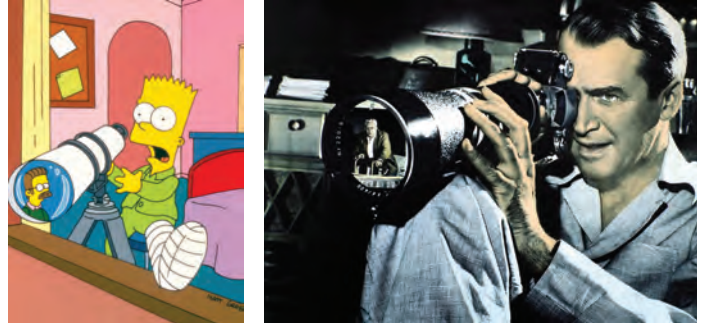
Figure 2.7 *The Simpsons* pays 'homage' to the famous opening scene of the mystery thriller *Rear Window* (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock. This scene is often used in film courses to teach about narrative. The reference is probably lost on young children, but more experienced viewers gain a heightened sense of pleasure from recognising the intertextuality.

Genres and audiences

There has been very little research into how audiences make sense of genres to construct meaning for themselves. However, two possible approaches are indicated:

- **Genres build audiences.** A media genre is a way of creating an identifiable product for sale. This product will then attract a certain sort of audience. In the case of television genres, the audience attracted can then be on-sold to advertisers. Genres also serve as a way for producers to manipulate audience memories and expectations.
- **Audience members use genre to build their own identities.** Some research has been attempted into gender preferences for particular genres. There is also some indication that people may use preferences for certain genres as building blocks to their sense of self. For instance, someone who has seen the romantic comedy *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) several times may possibly be using this movie to tell themselves something about their own desires or who they are.

Genres and industry

It probably isn't a coincidence that *Antz* (1998) by DreamWorks and *A Bug's Life* (1998) by Disney/ Pixar came out in the same year. It just makes good economic sense! Once a genre has been found to be successful, various studios will produce more of works in this genre to extract the most profit.

Recycling genre products has several other economic advantages. Reusing props, sets and costumes can save a considerable amount of money. Teams of writers and technicians can be built up, and their skills specialised into particular styles of production. Producing more of something eventually leads to what are called economies of scale: cost efficiencies created by mass production.

Genres change relatively slowly compared with the pace of production. Therefore, media companies are able to standardise their production within genres and know that their techniques will suit the market for a reasonable period of time. Different audiences can be catered for using different genres. This increases profitability because it leads to better targeting.

Table 1.2 Movies with similar storylines released at around the same time

PLOT PREMISE	MOVIE 1	MOVIE 2
Earth under threat from space	*Deep Impact* (1998)	*Armageddon* (1998)
CG animations about insects	*Antz* (1998)	*A Bug's Life* (1998)
Supernatural magic events set in late-19th-century Europe	*The Illusionist* (2006)	*The Prestige* (2006)
CG animations about supervillains who experience a change of heart	*Megamind* (2010)	*Despicable Me* (2010)
Ordinary characters in search of justice	*Kick-Ass* (2010)	*Super* (2010)

2.2 ACTIVITIES

1 As a whole class, make a list of all the media text genres you can think of. Begin with movies and then consider other media texts.
   Explain individually two of the genres listed by the class, **identifying** unique **codes and conventions** used by the genres.
   Construct a **systematically arranged** sequence of movie posters gathered from internet research that **illustrates** the genres you have chosen.
2 In small groups, list movies that came out in roughly the same time period and seem to have dealt with the same topic and used the same genre.
   Explain some of the reasons for the similarities, **identifying** contextual factors that may have influenced the development processes.
3 View an episode of *The Simpsons* and consider the use of intertextual references.
   Construct a list of textual cross-references.
   Explain the references by **identifying** the original source and **providing additional information** about the connection between the original source and the humour in the program.

CAMERA CODES AND CONVENTIONS

2.3.1
The 30 camera shots every film fan needs to know

Moving–image media have been around for a little over a century, and in that time a number of codes and conventions have developed. These are associated with production elements such as shot size, camera movement and so on. Everyone now has grown up with the cinema, and so the codes and conventions are well understood by audiences.

The use of the camera in a narrative has the capacity to transform the meaning of the material being depicted. The main variables for the camera are:
• the shot itself
• shot distance
• camera angle
• camera lens and depth of field (focus)
• framing and shot composition
• camera movement.

The meaning of each of these is very dependent on the context. The use of a particular camera element is determined by the narrative. However, there are some very broad general meanings that can be applied.

The shot

The **shot** is the prime vehicle for carrying the narrative. In the visual language of photography, television and film, the shot is the smallest unit of communication. It is equivalent to a short sentence

in prose. A typical Hollywood movie has between 800 and 1200 shots, or picture statements.

Like sentences, picture statements have subjects. The picture statement may be saying, 'Look at these great wide-open plains.' The next shot may say, 'Look at this man on a horse – see what he is doing.' Picture statements are usually changed for one of two reasons: a new subject is being introduced, or something different about the same subject is going to be shown.

In film, the term 'shot' has at least two definitions, and in the early days of cinema they were clearly distinguished. The arrival of computer-based media has tended to blur the differences between the two. In the first definition (camera on/off), a shot is the interval of time from when the camera is first turned on in a scene until the stop button is pressed. This definition includes any continuous movement within the shot. In the second, less common definition (position change), the shot is the duration of time until the camera is moved to another position. Depending on how strictly it is interpreted, this definition may or may not include continuous camera movement.

A filmmaker or photographer can consider five variables when creating a shot: shot size, framing, focus, angle and movement.

Length of takes

At the immediate opening of a film the size of shots tends to be larger. The same thing happens at the opening of scenes. Shot duration is often longer in the openings of individual scenes as well. Shots tend to be about five to eight seconds long, but the duration of introductory shots is often twice that.

When the narrative is in its early stages, audiences need to gather as much information as they can about the characters and setting. The pace of editing needs to be slower and the shot needs to last longer. Once the audience is familiar with the characters, the shot duration can be cut down.

Length of **take** falls under the umbrella of camera decisions because it requires the camera operator to perform it. However, length of take is also an editing decision. The editor may decide to reduce the length of take in order to increase the pace

Uninterrupted shots of more than one minute are called long takes. One of the most famous long takes in cinema history is at the opening of Orson Welles's *film noir* classic *Touch of Evil* (1958). It lasts for three minutes. A bomb is planted in a car. The camera cranes up to give a bird's-eye view, then tracks off following the car. The man and woman in the car engage in ordinary conversation, while the audience is held in suspense. The shot closes with the inevitable explosion. Robert Altman pays homage to this shot in his eight-minute opening take in *The Player* (1992). An exceptionally long take begins the film *Gravity* (2013). This is a complex shot made with the help of computer-generated imagery. It lasts for 17 minutes and draws the audience completely into the world of the story. The art film *Russian Ark* (2002) was deliberately filmed at the Winter Palace as one single Steadicam shot that lasted 96 minutes: a ghostly narrator floats through various rooms of the palace encountering different characters from the 300-year history of the city of Saint Petersburg up until 1913 (just before the 1917 Russian Revolution).
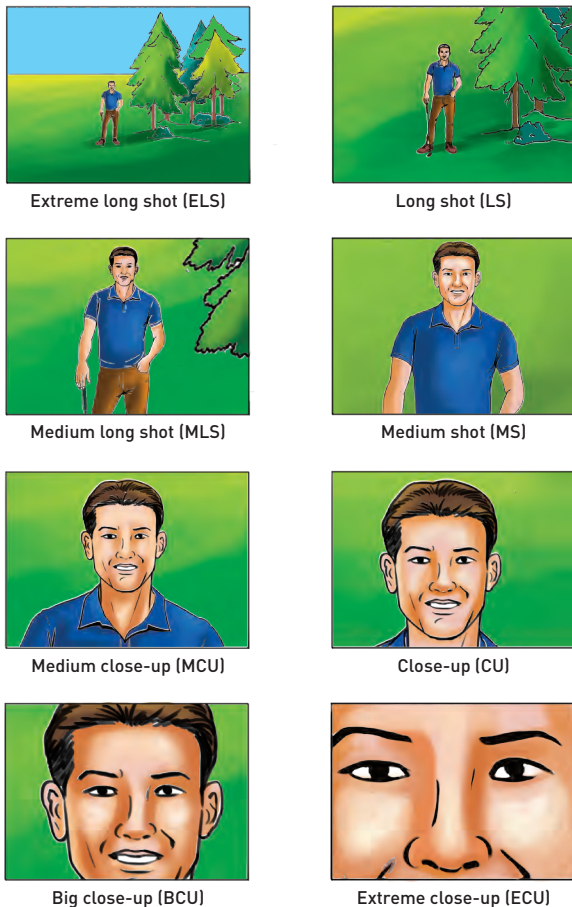

Extreme long shot (ELS)

Long shot (LS)

Medium long shot (MLS)

Medium shot (MS)

Medium close-up (MCU)

Close-up (CU)

Big close-up (BCU)

Extreme close-up (ECU)

Figure 2.8 The eight shot sizes. The human body is traditionally used to define the size of the shot. We measure everything against ourselves.

Figure 2.9 The long take is defined as an uninterrupted shot of more than one minute. There are many reasons directors use it. Sometimes it is a matter of style and a way of drawing attention to the artistry of the film; At other times it may suit the content of the narrative. A slow long take may be the best way of allowing audiences to gather a lot of information at the beginning of a narrative.

Shot sizes and narrative purpose

Alfred Hitchcock once told French film director and critic François Truffaut that the size of an object in the frame should be roughly in proportion to its importance in the story at that particular time. Directors choose their shot sizes carefully to suit the narrative.

There are eight main shot sizes (see Figure 2.8). Visual emphasis is directly related to the size of the subject in the shot. The shot size also determines the amount of visual material that can be included. Smaller shot sizes concentrate audience attention.

Therefore, the choice of which shot to use is among the most fundamental decisions every director makes.

Extreme long shot (ELS)

Extreme long shot (ELS) shows a wide view of the complete setting, such as a coral reef in the middle of a vast ocean. In human terms, a person would be barely visible in the scene. The ELS is almost always an exterior shot. Extreme long shots are often highly composed and use traditional techniques such as the rule of thirds and diagonals to focus attention on particular zones (see page 27). Extreme long shots are usually held for a longer time because it can take a while for the audience to absorb all the information.

In the narrative, an extreme long shot has several functions:

- An ELS gives a sense of scale and also provides location. Extreme long shots are often used in those genres that rely on landscape: epic movies, historical movies, Westerns, road movies and science-fiction movies.
- An ELS can be used to provide a frame of reference for the closer shots that follow. For this reason, they are often used as **establishing shots**.
- An ELS can show spatial relationships and the way groups of people are going to come into play with each other. The ELS is also used for grand scale with massed human subjects. For example, an ELS is often used to show a battle scene.
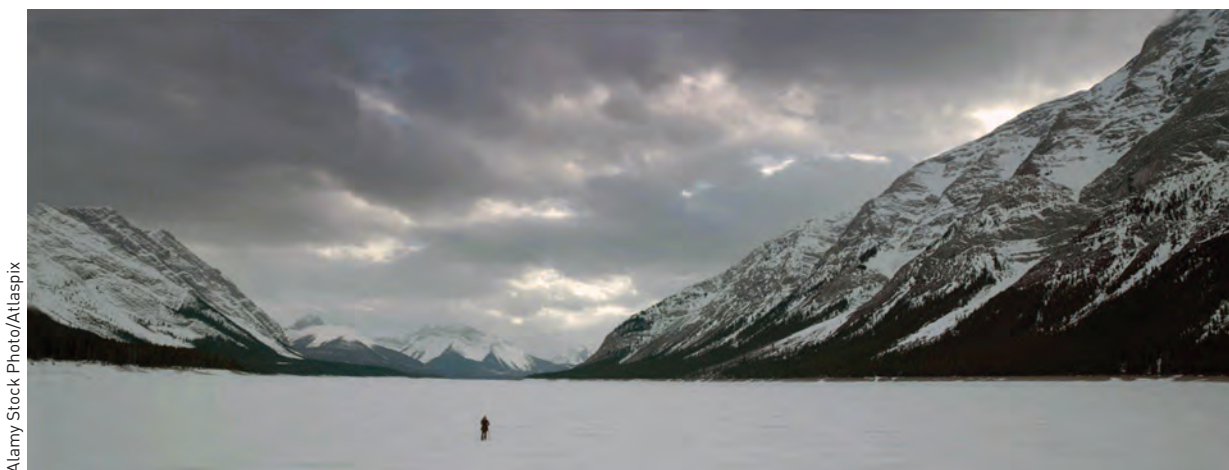
Figure 2.10 Extreme long shot from *The Revenant* (2015). This scene was shot in Alberta, Canada where the temperature rarely reached above −30 degrees Centigrade. Diagonal lines formed by the mountains direct the viewer's attention to the human figure in the landscape. The character is a mere speck on the flat expanse of snow, but the attention is also drawn to him because he is moving.

Long shot (LS)

A long shot (LS) is closer than an ELS but still shows the complete scene. On a human scale, a human figure is clearly visible, and the complete person fits easily within the frame. In a typical LS, the background still dominates the human figure. The term 'long shot' can be imprecise. The closest an LS gets to a person is to show the whole human body from head to toe. At its furthest, an LS keeps the human body as dominant in the frame. However, emotions are not easily read at this distance.

The LS is one of the most common shots in the cinema.

1   An LS is used in narrative to establish the scene and to introduce characters. Genres that focus more on character or the human figure and less on landscape tend to use a lot of long shots. Such genres include musicals, martial arts films and action movies. Long shots are often used in these genres to allow us to see characters displaying their skills. An LS allows the audience to see the full body in movement.
2   An LS can be used as an establishing shot, particularly in order to establish or leave a scene. It shows where all the characters are in relation to each other in the scene. It also gives a glimpse of the complete action.
3   Characters in a group are often filmed in LS. An ELS allows characters to be recognised, but facial expressions cannot easily be read.
4   Long shots can be used to limit emotional involvement with characters. For instance, antagonists are more often filmed in LS than protagonists are.

Figure 2.11 The long shot has several purposes in the narrative. It can introduce characters or work as an establishing shot. It tends to create emotional distance as we cannot read facial expressions. In a war movie, characters filmed in long shot will not garner the same level of audience distress when they become casualties.

Medium long shot (MLS)

Medium long shot (MLS) still provides a great deal of information about the setting. Human characters can be seen in detail and almost all of the body (usually from just below the knees) is in the frame.

French filmmakers once called this 'the American shot', as it was very common in Hollywood Westerns and during the *film noir* period.

1   A common purpose of the MLS is to provide for both dialogue and action. In *noir* films, a detective may be surrounded by a carefully arranged formation of underworld characters.
2   An MLS is often used for **two-shots** because there is room in the frame for more than one character.
3   Some emotion can be seen, so MLS is suitable when other characters and landscapes are involved in emotional relationships.

Medium shot (MS)

Medium shot (MS), sometimes called mid-shot, is defined by some as 'not too close, not too far'. On the human body, an MS would start at around the waist and include a little space above the head. Gesture and expression are now more clearly visible.

Figure 2.12 A mid-shot from the movie *Bandslam* (2009). Shallow depth of field in this shot has defocused additional background information, except for the product placement.

The MS is ideal for the following narrative situations:

1   showing conversations between one or more characters, often until a key moment arrives when there is a cut to close-up

2   showing dialogue together with some limited action

3   revealing aspects of body language and facial expression combined. A significant part of the body – the upper body – is still included

4   providing the midway point in a sequence from long shot to close-up.

Medium close-up

Medium close-up (MCU) frames the subject moderately closely. Medium close-ups used to be the typical frame for a newsreader, but many are now framed in medium shot. The head and

Photo by Matt Nettheim, image courtesy of Blackfella Films.

Figure 2.13 Eddie Mabo (Jimi Bani) and his wife Bonita (Deborah Mailman), in the living room of their Townsville house, from the television miniseries *Mabo* (2012). A medium close-up shows the head and shoulders. *Mabo* is a biopic about Torres Strait Island man Eddie ʻKoikiʼ Mabo who was a gardener on campus at James Cook University in Townsville. He led a campaign all the way to the High Court of Australia that would eventually establish the principle of native title. Native title gave Indigenous Australians land rights. It established that the land was inhabited, and that the land was owned before Europeans arrived. Before that High Court decision in 1992, it was assumed that Indigenous people had no system of ownership, and that the land was vacant (*terra nullius*). Eddie Mabo changed Australian law, and the way we think about our history.

shoulders fit comfortably in the frame with a little room above the head.

1   An MCU allows the audience to see facial expressions and emotions.

2   An MCU also allows the audience to see body language.

3   Background information is still visible, although it is often defocused. The director can still take advantage of *mise en scène* (props, costumes, landscape, lighting carefully placed in the scene).

4   An MCU increases emotional involvement.

Close-up

Close-up (CU) shows the detail of a subject. A typical CU shows only the head of a person, usually from the middle of the neck upwards. Close-ups often use a shallow depth of field. This is so the audience focuses only on the important details.

The existence of the CU is one of the reasons acting for film differs from acting for the stage.

1   The CU is often used in narrative to show emotion. It is common in both film and television, but television narrative relies more heavily on it. Before the advent of film, a close-up view of a face was usually only seen in intimate real-life situations.

2   Audience identification is much stronger when characters are shot in CU.

3   A CU is often used at plot turning points and moments of high emotion.

4   A CU can convey the importance of the subject – the more space is devoted to something in the frame, the more important it is in the narrative.

Big close-up (BCU)

Big close-up (BCU) shows the detail of its subject, with the emphasis on the most important features. For example, a BCU might show the area from the middle of the forehead to just above the chin; this would show the **social triangle** of the eyes and mouth.

The BCU fulfils a similar function to the CU.

1   BCUs are used to show extremes of emotion.

2   A BCU completely restricts background information.

Extreme close-up (ECU)

Extreme close-up (ECU) shows only a portion of detail or magnifies something that is minute.

Getty Images/by_nicholas

Figure 2.14 Extreme close-ups can be used to show a detail of emotion, such as a tear drop. They are often used when the detail is symbolic. The use of ECUs indicates that the detail is extremely important in the narrative.

An example of an ECU would be a dramatic focus on someone's eyes. Often an ECU is used to create a sense of mystery. It can be very effective in hiding what something is until a dramatic camera pull-back.

1   An ECU directs the audience to believe that the detail is extremely important in the narrative. It can often be useful for foreshadowing. Sometimes an ECU of an object means it is about to be use; for example, a close-up of a gun immediately suggests its appearance in use in the next shot.

2   An ECU is often used when a detail is symbolic.

Table 1.3 The range of shot sizes used in selected films from the database of Australian film historian Barry Salt. ASL refers to average shot length (in seconds). Note the increase in frequency of big close-ups (BCU) and the decrease in extreme long shots (ELS) over time.

TITLE	YEAR	ASL (SECONDS)	FREQUENCY OF SHOT TYPE						
			BCU	CU	MCU	MS	MLS	LS	ELS
The Birth of a Nation	1915	7	1	19	26	78	126	172	79
Battleship Potemkin	1925	3	32	75	67	69	71	160	26
The Birds	1963	5.3	59	127	111	69	57	58	19
Beetlejuice	1988	4.2	44	166	106	50	66	55	12
Dark City	1998	2	153	112	44	39	42	97	12
10 Things I Hate About You	1999	6.7	64	224	82	37	36	53	3
The Blair Witch Project	1999	15.8	96	74	70	93	88	79	0
The Sixth Sense	1999	8.6	91	135	93	59	59	60	2

Source: http://www.cinemetrics.lv/salt.php

Camera angle and the narrative

2.3.2 Camera angles: the art of manipulation

The camera angle can often serve as a director's comment on the subject matter. It allows the director to manipulate the audience's reaction to the material in the shot. The camera angle sets up the relationship the audience has with the subject of the shot. Camera angle can also establish the power relations between characters on screen. An example of this occurs in the musical *Dirty Dancing* (1987), when Baby first declares her admiration and love for Johnny. Having played her hand, she is shown as vulnerable in a high camera angle; he is powerful because he may reject her. A low camera angle ensures he towers over her, until he softens and then declares his love in return. At that moment, the camera angle returns to normal and equalises their power relations.

There are five main camera angles: eye-level angle, high angle, low angle, extremely high or bird's-eye angle, and canted or Dutch angle.

Eye-level angle

The height to which the camera is most often adjusted is eye level. This is how we experience the world, so shooting at this level creates a feeling of normality.

In a narrative, eye-level shots suggest realism. They are routine, everyday shots that encourage the audience to suspend disbelief and enter into the world of the story.

High camera angle (HCA)

This angle is created when the camera is positioned high and tilts down on the subject. HCAs tend to place the audience in the position of an adult looking down on a child. The subject looks inferior or unimportant and the viewer feels superior.

In narratives, HCAs tend to suggest vulnerability. A HCA also tends to slow down movement. It is not effective in giving a sense of urgency or speed. However, HCAs do increase the importance of the surrounding environment, making the person seem less important. HCAs can also give the audience the feeling that characters are overwhelmed or stressed out.

Figure 2.15 In the film *Psycho* (1960), Marion Crane steals $40 000 and drives out of Phoenix, Arizona, to California. She sleeps overnight in the car but is awakened by a suspicious policeman. Marion is intimidated by the policeman, and the high camera angle (top) has the narrative purpose of making us feel her lack of power and vulnerability. The low camera angle shot of the policeman (bottom) gives him extra power and superiority. The audience also feels menaced because he looks directly at us.

Extremely high camera angle

If the camera is very high, almost overhead, it gives a bird's-eye view of the subject. This can create a feeling that the viewer is like a god looking down on events. This type of shot is sometimes called an **overshot**.

In a narrative, an extremely high camera angle is often used at the end of scenes. In certain cases, it can suggest impending death or punishment. A spectacular example of this occurs at the end of the cult road movie *Easy Rider* (1969). The overshot can be used to hide aspects of character, as occurs in *Psycho* (1960) when the killer Norman Bates is filmed directly overhead on the staircase.

Low camera angle (LCA)

When the camera is low to the ground and tilts upward at its subject, the viewer feels inferior or threatened. The subject seems overpowering. LCA creates the perspective of a child looking up at an all-powerful adult.

In the narrative, LCA can suggest someone is threatening or it can suggest someone is superior or respected. The interpretation depends on the context. LCA also tends to speed up movement, so it is good for violent scenes. It can also create a sense of confusion. Information about the environment is limited, because LCA captures mostly ceilings and skies.

Figure 2.16 An extreme low camera angle from *Batman Begins* (2005) makes the audience feel like vulnerable prey. The shot with a spiral staircase is an intertextual reminder of a shot in *The Third Man* (1949). Low camera angle is usually not so dramatic, as even a minor lowering can produce a narrative effect.

Canted or Dutch angle

When the camera is canted or tilted to one side so that the horizon is on an angle, it creates an effect that is disorienting and unsettling for the audience. It feels off-balance and therefore suggests a crazy world. Dutch angle was commonly used in **German Expressionism**.

In the narrative, Dutch angles create a sense of disorientation and confusion. If there is a sequence of canted shots, it is tradition to tilt from one side to the other, so a left-canted shot is followed by a right-canted shot. Dutch angles can be seen in the opening scenes of *Bagdad Cafe* (1987), where the angles add to the foreignness of the situation and reflect the domestic conflict between a German couple lost in the American desert. Dutch angles are also used in *The Third Man* (1949) to show the protagonist's disorientation.

Camera lenses and depth of field

Camera lenses allow the filmmaker to make the settings and spaces of the film suit the purposes of the narrative. Different lenses can make the subject matter of the shot look quite different.

Types of camera lenses

Camera lenses come in three basic ranges based on their focal length. Focal length determines the angle of view. It is basically defined as the distance from a midpoint in the lens to the focal point on the film or imaging surface (sometimes called the picture or focal plane). Focal length is measured in millimetres. The following ranges refer to 35-millimetre movie cameras.

- **Normal movie lenses** (focal length 27–75 millimetres) are roughly approximate to the perspective of the human eye. There is no distortion apparent.
- **Wide-angle movie lenses** (focal length less than 27 millimetres) provide a wider angle of vision than the human eye. They make the scene look wider and deeper. For example, the shot in Figure 2.10 from *The Revenant* (2015) uses a wide-angle lens. Characters and objects in the foreground look larger; characters and objects in the background look smaller. These lenses also accentuate movements that are close to the camera because they make distances look longer. They tend to exaggerate movements that are

placed in the central field of view. *The Truman Show* (1998) uses a wide-angle lens at times to emphasise the sense of surveillance.

- **Telephoto movie lenses** (focal length 75–1000 millimetres) compress the distances between the foreground and background. This makes objects appear to be much closer together, flattening the perspective. These lenses also seem to slow down movement towards the camera. This is because distances are compressed, and close figures seem to be a similar size to more distant ones (flattened perspective).

Shutterstock.com/kqlsm

Figure 2.17 A telephoto lens compresses the distance between the bikes and gives the impression of slow movement. Directors choose their lens type to suit the effect on settings and spaces.

Depth of field

A filmmaker can use focus to make the audience pay attention to certain details within the narrative. Selective focus can be used to draw attention to someone's face, for example. The background and other details can be downplayed by keeping them out of focus.

The area of the frame that is in sharp focus is called the depth of field. The depth of this area is determined by the length of the lens and the size of aperture used. Generally speaking, a wide-angle lens has a greater depth of field than a telephoto lens – that is, more of the image will be in focus with a wide-angle lens.

'If I made big budget films I would have that deep depth of field because it plays upon the effect of surprise. It can give you a whole series of little tricks, little hiding places, little hooks in the image where you can hang surprises, places where they can suddenly appear, just like that. You can create the off-frame within the frame.'

Benoît Jacquot, French film director, *Seventh Heaven* (1997)

There are two main types and usages of depth of field.

Deep focus

The term 'deep focus' is applied to films that have everything in focus, from the foreground to the distant background. Deep focus films need lots of light, a small camera aperture, a fast wide-angle lens and fast film stock. Deep focus tends to favour long takes. With so much of the frame in focus, there is more information for the audience to absorb. Therefore, there is a greater need to linger on the shot. Deep focus also favours the 'invisible style' of **continuity editing** (see page 41). Movies using deep focus include *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Jaws* (1975) and *The Untouchables* (1987).

Because deep focus mimics the operation of the human eye, it creates a greater sense of **realism**. The filmed image looks more like the real world. Some critics say this allows the audience to make up their own minds about meaning a lot more easily – just as they do in real life.

Figure 2.18 The deep focus technique is evident in this shot from *Citizen Kane* (1941) showing Kane (Orson Welles) in the foreground, addressing a rapt audience of businessmen at a long banqueting table.

Selective focus

Most modern films use a selective or shallow focus technique, where only some of the shot is in focus. Selective focus or shallow focus relies more on quick cutting and lots of close-ups. It is therefore more suited to **montage** editing (see page 430) and the quicker pace of many films.

Figure 2.19 Selective focus in *Avatar* (2009). Deep focus is disappearing from the modern cinema, says film analyst David Bordwell. Shot lengths are decreasing, and framing is getting closer. Modern dialogue scenes are often shot in mid-shot or close-up.

Selective focus is often said to be less realist in its approach, and more expressive and personal. Because the audience seems to see less of the real world, the director's personal view is strengthened. A film that exemplifies the selective focus approach is Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001).

Changing focus

Sometimes the focus is changed in the middle of a single shot. The two main kinds of focus change are follow focus and pull (or rack) focus.

- **Follow focus.** The camera follows the moving subject, keeping the subject in focus while the background changes.
- **Pull (or rack) focus.** The focus suddenly changes in order to direct attention away from one subject and towards another. For example, a shot with wire net fencing in sharp focus may suddenly be pull focused onto the prisoners exercising in the enclosed yard beyond.

Framing

The photographic frame is not just a simple border, according to American film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. It is not like the margin of a page. The frame produces a vantage point. It gives a point of view and it selects some details over others. The frame lets us see some things and not others.

Bordwell and Thompson list four main ways that framing can influence what the audience sees.

1 **Aspect ratio.** The size and shape of the frame is called the aspect ratio because it is based on the ratio of width to height (gained by dividing width by height). The standard television ratio is 4:3 or 1.33:1, while widescreen television uses 16:9 or 1.78:1. Cinema uses a variety of

ratios, but most widescreen formats are slightly larger than 16:9, with 1.85:1 the most common. However, some epic films such as *The Lord of the Rings* (2001, 2002, 2003) use CinemaScope, with a ratio of 2.35:1.

2 **On-screen and off-screen space.** When the audience sees a shot on screen, everyone assumes that space and life continue consistently outside the frame and all around it. How a director uses this assumption can be important to the narrative. An example of this is the use of looking space or talking space. This is an area of negative or empty space in front of a framed person, which suggests someone else is outside the frame. Another way of suggesting space outside the frame is to use **eyelines**. A character can appear to look towards a point outside the frame.

Figure 2.20 Space outside the frame is suggested in both these shots. Shot A uses 'looking space' to suggest that the character is talking to someone outside the frame. Shot B has negative space behind the person, suggesting action is happening, or is about to happen, outside the frame behind the character.

3 **Angle, height and distance.** The idea of the frame as a vantage point suggests that framing places the viewer in a certain position – perhaps above or below the subject, or close or far in the distance. Each of these positions affects the narrative in some way.

4 **Frame movement.** As the camera moves, so too does the frame. How this happens in relation to the events on the screen changes our involvement in the story.


Courtesy NBCUniversal

Figure 2.21 In Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960), diagonal lines formed by the cars and the roadway all point to the powerful figure of the policeman and thus help to position the character within the narrative.

Composition

Composing a shot is a matter of arranging the elements to create a desirable effect within the narrative. The following two conventions are among the most commonly used.

• **Lines and diagonals.** Placing elements on imaginary lines can create interesting effects. The lines may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal across the image. In a narrative, diagonal lines build a sense of drama and may be used to direct attention towards a character or event. For example, the shot in Figure 2.10 (see page 20) from *The Revenant* (2015) uses diagonals to heighten the sense of emptiness.

• **Rule of thirds.** Some say the subject of a photograph should never be placed in the centre of the frame. Instead, the focus of interest should be at the intersection of imaginary lines that divide the frame into thirds.
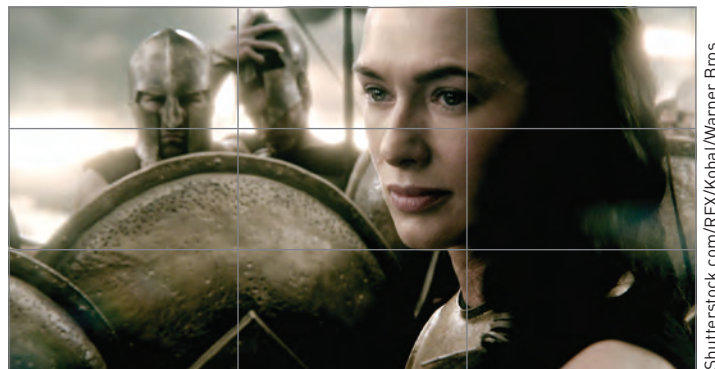
Shutterstock.com/REX/Kobal/Warner Bros

Figure 2.22 From *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014). The rule of thirds can be applied to this image. Points of visual interest are at the intersections of the lines.

Figure 2.23 *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* was the most reprinted photograph of World War II. Victorious but exhausted, a small group of marines climbed Mount Suribachi to hoist the flag. Notice the use of strong diagonals and the application of the rule of thirds in the photograph. Notice also how inspired and triumphant this photograph is: the flag is flying upwards not drooping; all men are engaged in the struggle, the last reaching upwards, the first crouched down; the open sky dominates the space; and the wreckage of war forms a base for victory.

Composition is placed in the camera section because it requires the camera operator to compose aspects of the shot. However, composition is also a technique of *mise en scène*. The director decides which elements to include and how to arrange them.

Camera movement

Camera movement in a shot directs the audience to where the filmmaker wants them to look. It can help establish visual emphasis. But the movement of the camera can also be like our own movements. For example, when the camera moves in, it is as though we have moved closer. Camera movement is important in positioning the audience within the narrative.

Following are the main types of camera movements and their narrative purpose.

Panning shot

The term **panning** is derived from 'panorama' and means moving a camera in a long horizontal sweep from one side of a scene to another. Since a long rotation from left or right can be difficult to perform, most camera operators use a tripod. Pans occur in real time; they cannot be edited down or shortened very easily. Therefore, pans are placed at

moments in the narrative when there is sufficient time – often at the beginning of the movie.

Swish or zip pans are extremely fast and tend to blur everything between the start and finish of the pan.

In a narrative, a pan helps to set the scene. For this reason, pans are often used as establishing shots. A pan can also be used to heighten the suspense in a narrative, as the audience scans the scene, waiting to be shown something. In this way, a pan can also be used as a point-of-view shot (POV shot) to show what a character sees as they scan the scene. Probably the most analysed pan in cinema history is the opening shot of *Psycho* (1960). At the start of the narrative, this pan across the city hints at the way 'evil' can randomly enter the lives of ordinary people.

Tracking shot

In a **tracking shot**, the camera moves along the ground: forward, back, diagonally or from side to side. Originally, cameras were moved on little railway-like tracks. This method is still sometimes used today; however, a dolly (tripod with wheels) is often substituted. More recently, Steadicams have also been used.

In a narrative, a tracking shot moves the audience through the scene, making it seem more three-dimensional. It is also very precise about what is important: the subject being followed. Tracking and dollying lend narrative significance or importance to the subject. For instance, tracking shots are used to introduce the characters in *GoodFellas* (1990).

Figure 2.24 Crane and tracking shot for a film shoot. Note that a small section of track has been laid down to allow the crane carrying the camera to move smoothly.

Figure 2.25 A tracking shot being filmed for HBO's *The Pacific* (2010) outside Flinders Street Station, Melbourne. Note that a small section of track has been laid down to allow the camera dolly to move smoothly.

Steadicam shot

A **Steadicam** is a gyroscopic camera mount that smooths out camera movements. It uses weights and counterbalances to allow the camera to float on a mechanical arm. The operator wears the Steadicam attached to a special harness. A Steadicam can mimic tracking shots and dolly shots, and allows the operator complete freedom of movement to circle 360 degrees around a character or even to run up some stairs with them.

In the narrative, the fluid movement of a Steadicam allows the audience to feel they are really there. Because it is achieved in real time, the camera movement gives the audience the impression that something really important is happening and all editing has been slowed to allow its significance to be seen. Steadicam is a useful camera movement for closings; for example, a Steadicam shot is used to resolve the narrative in the closing scene of the film *Notting Hill* (1999). Steadicam was first used in horror movies, because its floating movement was able to conjure up the sense of 'the monster' and create suspense.

Figure 2.26 A Steadicam smooths out camera movements by mounting the camera on a counterbalanced mechanical arm. The Steadicam was invented in 1979 and transformed camera movement.

Dollying shot

A dolly is a wheeled tripod or platform with the camera mounted on it. **Dollying shots** are similar to tracking shots. A dolly is used in the opening sequence of Robert Altman's *The Player* (1992).

In the narrative, a dolly can be used to comment on the action. Often when a tense moment has arrived in the plot, the camera will dolly in on a character until they are shown in close-up. The movement heightens the tension and significance. Perhaps the character has to make a decision or has made a crucial discovery. A dolly-out suggests leaving the scene, but often after something significant has happened – perhaps a crime. Dollies can also be used to move in on important evidence left behind.

Crane shot

A **crane shot** is performed by a camera moving up or down on a mechanical arm or crane. For different effects, the camera can be raised or lowered at all sorts of angles.

In the narrative, crane shots can be used to give a sense of scale. They are often used as establishing shots for this reason. Crane shots give a feeling of entering or leaving a series of events. A crane shot up and away at the end of a scene gives an air of finality. Crane shots are dramatic and are usually reserved for significant moments in the narrative. This happens in *The Piano* (1993) when Ada finally agrees to obey her husband and give Baines piano lessons. A crane shot is used to heighten the effect of her submission to his will.

Figure 2.27 A camera mounted on a crane boom. Some cranes allow the camera operator to sit up with the camera on a small platform.

Zoom shot

A **zoom shot** is similar to a tracking shot but the camera stays still. A zoom in enlarges or magnifies an area of the frame, changing shot size from

(for example) a long-shot to a close-up. A zoom-out is the reverse, changing shot size (for example) from close-up to long shot. A zoom does not have the effect of allowing us to move through the scene. Unlike a tracking shot, it does not add to the three-dimensional feeling. Instead, a zoom enlarges or magnifies the subject. Zooming in on a character suggests we should listen to him or her; zooming out has the opposite effect.

First appearing in films in the late 1920s, the camera zoom is a technique that has no parallel in the human eye. Some filmmakers therefore consider it an unnatural technique and use the zoom sparingly. The first use of a zoom in a Hollywood film is believed to be that in the opening scenes of *It* (1927) starring Clara Bow. For many years the zoom was only used in nonfiction genres such as news or documentary. However, modern filmmakers are turning to it for its shock value, often using a rapid zoom called a **zip-zoom**. This technique can be seen in the opening scenes of Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

In a narrative, a zoom suggests a sense of urgency and often extreme danger. Because of its association with news (and its similarity to the contra zoom from horror), the zoom makes the audience feel a stronger sense of immediacy. It feels as though the action is happening now.

Contra zoom (dolly zoom) shot

Horror movies often use a specialised zoom called a contra zoom. It can also be called the Hitchcock zoom, since he was the first director to use it, but it has many other names. Some refer to it as a dolly zoom, a triple-zoom reflex, or even the trombone shot. In a **contra zoom**, the camera zooms in at the same time as it tracks in the reverse direction, leading to a dramatically disorienting change in perspective.

In a narrative, the contra zoom is effective in portraying a reaction of horrified awe. This can be seen in *The Lion King* (1994) when Simba practises his roar and almost gets caught in a stampede. The technique is also used in *Jaws* (1975) when Chief Brody first spots the great shark's fin.

Tilt shot

A **tilt** movement swivels the camera up or down while it is mounted on the tripod. This movement is like a vertical pan. The tilt is also like a pan in that it happens in real time.

In the narrative, a tilt is often used as an establishing shot, just like the pan. The scene is introduced as the camera gradually tilts up or down to also, eventually, reveal the character. This makes a connection between the character and their setting. Like the pan, the tilt gives the impression that something will eventually be revealed. It can also give the feeling of a scene gradually unrolling like a scroll, from top to bottom. In Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci's *Besieged* (1998), a tilt from the bottom of a stairwell to the top landing establishes the distance between an African servant and her wealthy British employer.

Handheld shot

Handheld cameras have tended to signify amateur productions for most of the history of television and film. However, the arrival of lighter cameras meant that handheld shots became quite common in news and documentary filming. In these genres, the information was seen as more important than the formal construction of the shot. From the 1960s, the **cinéma vérité** movement in documentary film strengthened the importance of handheld camera work in news and documentary genres. The handheld camera found new popularity in fictional films after *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) used documentary techniques in a horror movie.

In a narrative, use of a handheld camera often lends an air of documentary truth or creates feelings of frantic confusion.

Cable shot

With the increasing portability of cameras, dramatic shots can be achieved by mounting the camera on a flying-fox device strung on a cable. This can be used to fly a camera in through a window, for example.

Figure 2.28 Stuntman Keir Beck testing his flying camera system at the Holden Performance Driving Centre at Norwell, Queensland.

Newspix/Adam Head

Digital composite shot

Modern computer-generated special effects allow for all sorts of camera movements that are impossible to achieve in real life. Many of these are combinations of several of the traditional camera movements. A digital composite shot is used at the beginning of the science-fiction movie *Contact* (1997). The shot starts by zooming away from Earth into the solar system,

through the Milky Way, and finally comes out of the eye of a young girl! The famous opening shot of *The Birdcage* (1996) is a digital composite shot made up of three separate shots seamlessly joined together. It starts with an aerial shot over the Atlantic Ocean, speeding towards the Art Deco buildings of South Beach, Miami, and ending up on the dance floor and stage inside the Carlyle Hotel.

Table 2.1 Frequency of camera movements in selected films, from the database of Australian film historian Barry Salt. Note that the total number of camera movements can fluctuate considerably between films and is not clearly dependent on the time of production.

TITLE	PAN	TILT	PAN WITH TILT	TRACK	TRACK WITH PAN	TRACK WITH PAN AND TILT	CRANE	ZOOM	TOTAL
Gaslight (1940)	7	34	27	29	20	3	41	0	161
Back Street (1941)	13	0	6	12	19	5	2	0	57
Dark City (1998)	15	10	11	22	1	6	35	0	100
10 Things I Hate About You (1999)	12	3	6	20	32	18	10	1	102
The Blair Witch Project (1999)	12	12	79	24	15	137	0	31	310
EDtv (1999)	15	3	11	29	9	11	3	5	86

(http://www.cinemetrics.lv/salt.php)

2.3 ACTIVITIES

1 Find the most dramatic camera angle in a chosen film.
Explain how you think this was achieved technically. Provide information about the purpose this angle fulfils.
Construct a folio of magazine photographs that illustrate the main shot types and angles.
Systematically arrange each photograph on a separate page of your folio.
Title each page with the type or angle that the photograph illustrates (for example, *shot size – medium long shot*).
Explain the effect of the shot size or angle underneath each picture. Provide additional information about the creation of the shot that helps clarify understanding.

2 View the pan across the city of Phoenix that opens the film *Psycho* (1960).
Explain how this pan suggests that 'evil' can enter anyone's life, and explain how the pan develops the narrative of the movie. Identify the key points in the movement of the camera that reveal the limitations of the available technology (for example, one of them is at the entry into the window).
Compare Hitchcock's pan with the one across Paris that opens *Moulin Rouge!* (2001).
Analyse the narrative similarities and differences. Make a judgement on the strengths and weaknesses of each scene using narrative effectiveness and use of available technology as the criteria.

3 Select a scene from a film, view it several times, and then note down the shots and the range of sizes used.
Explain how each shot in the scene is filmed in the appropriate shot size to suit the narrative at that point.

4 Analyse the potential of two alternative shot sizes that could have been used for a shot from the scene.
For example, could the close-up shot in the original film have been shot in mid-shot or long shot? Make a judgement as to why these sizes would have been less appropriate, using progression of the narrative as the criteria.

5 Find a scene in a movie where lens choice or depth of field makes an obvious contribution to the narrative.
Explain the effect of selective focus or lens choice.

Analyse the scene and break down the **constituent parts** of the shots where choice of lens or depth of field is important. **Consider** the elements of the scene that are enhanced by the use of these techniques. **Make a judgement** as to the effectiveness of the choice of lens or depth of field using progression of the narrative as the **criteria**.

6 Select one or two dramatic or climactic moments in a film. Carefully study the camera movements that are used in those scenes.

Explain the movement of the camera, **giving information** about the technical processes involved in achieving the shot.

Analyse the shot and interpret the extra meaning that is added through the camera movement. **Make a judgement** as to the effectiveness of the movement using progression of the narrative as the criteria.

7 Review the camera movement in the opening scenes of a film.

Analyse the scene, **considering** the duration of the shots and the types of camera movement, especially in the first few shots. **Make a judgement** as to how this assists in the initial development of the narrative.

8 Imagine a scene in which the characters have a clear power relationship. For example, it could be a teacher–student scenario, boss–worker or bully–victim. Then respond to the areas of activity in the table below. At the end, show your experiments to the class and discuss your findings.

EXPLAIN	CONSTRUCT	EXPERIMENT
Explain the premise of the scene and provide some **additional information** about the characters and their power relationship.	**Construct** a narrative plan of the scene, **systematically assembling the elements** of the story for that brief section. **Construct** an acting and shooting plan showing where the characters will be and where the camera will be placed.	**Experiment** with camera angles to produce a narrative effect, **trying out new ideas** until you **discover a technique** that works. **Experiment** using minor changes to the camera angles at first, and then film a take with more dramatic ones. **Experiment** by challenging traditional ideas about the meaning of angles (e.g. HCA necessarily means superiority).

9 **Experiment** with the contra zoom or dolly zoom to create the classic shock-and-awe effect.

10 Re-shooting a popular movie scene (or even the whole movie) shot for shot as an act of homage (see page 100) by fans with limited budgets is called **sweding**. Many sites exist on the internet showcasing these homemade versions of big budget films.

Synthesise an homage to a short scene from a well-known film. Be sure that the scene is safe to replicate and will not put actors or crew at risk. Consult with your teacher and prepare a risk assessment (see page 109). **Solve** any of the **technical or creative problems** posed by the demands of the scene and your available technology using your knowledge of **production practices**.

MISE EN SCÈNE

2.4.1
Mise en scène

2.4.2
Explainer:
mise en scène

Many terms in film have their origins in the theatre. ***Mise en scène*** was originally a theatre term that meant something equivalent to 'staging'. It is now important in the analysis of films. *Mise en scène* helps to create the narrative space and progress the narrative.

The main elements of *mise en scène* are setting, costume, make-up, acting and lighting. It is best to consider *mise en scène* as that which the director has control over. This would normally exclude the script, for example. Acting and lighting are dealt with in more detail in other sections.

Each element of *mise en scène* influences how the audience experiences the story. Filmmakers use *mise en scène* intentionally in a systematic way to present character development and to establish themes and moods.

Mise en scène is French for 'put in the scene or frame' and refers to all the visual details a filmmaker can include in the screen image. Although the term is widely used, it is of relatively recent origin. French film critics coined it during the **French New Wave** of the 1950s. They saw *mise en scène* as a unique mode of expression for an *auteur* (author/director). It was very useful as a concept when most films were shot in studios or on constructed sets. The director,

Figure 2.29 Aaron Eckhart in Australian director Stuart Beattie's *I, Frankenstein* (2014), filmed in Melbourne at Docklands. The film started out as a graphic novel. The director, production designers, location scouts and other crew prepared the *mise en scène* of the film well in advance of filming. *Mise en scène* refers to all the visual details put in the frame: the 'look' of the film. Note the amount of space or territory taken up in the frame by the main character. This use of the actor as a graphic element is part of *mise en scène*.

or *auteur*, had a lot of control over what went into the shot. This occurred from the early days of the movies until the 1950s. In modern film analysis, its use has gained more relevance as directors use more computer-generated imagery.

Mise en scène is the film's way of communicating a mass of information. It is equivalent to the descriptive passages in a novel – that is, everything in the novel except the spoken dialogue. One way to think of *mise en scène* is to imagine a still image from a feature film. If you sat down and pored over this image, extracting every bit of meaning from it and noting every detail, then you would be analysing the *mise en scène*. You would be studying every prop, every detail of furniture and every aspect of costume. As you did so, it would probably become clear to you that almost nothing is in that image by chance. It was all put there!

The look of the film

The *mise en scène* of a film is determined quite early in the pre-production and production stages. The director usually sits down with the production designer and

they plan how the film will look before any filming takes place. Location scouts, art directors, costume designers and make-up artists all work together to have everything ready in advance. The director may even call in the actors and do some preliminary blocking of their movements. A choreographer may gather together a team to plan out the action sequences or song and dance movements.

Composition

Composition in this text is described as both a camera technique and a *mise en scène* technique. It refers to how the objects, actors and spaces are composed or arranged in the frame. Composition in film is similar to composition in art. It tends to be based around symmetry or balance. This comes from the arrangement of dominant and non-dominant centres of attention.

- **Symmetry**. This refers to the balance of light, colour and objects or figures in the frame. A common rule of thumb in achieving this is the rule of thirds (see page 27). However, a director can also call attention to particular elements in the frame by creating an unbalanced composition.
- **Dominant centres of attention**. The viewer's attention can be guided to particular places in the frame in three main ways:
  - **Movement.** The audience will pay attention to whatever is moving about the most in the frame: the speeding car, the dancing girl or the galloping horse.
  - **Colour.** Contrasting colours will draw attention. Bright colours will be dominant while muted colours will merge into the background.
  - **Lighting.** The viewer's eyes will be drawn to the area of the frame that has the most light.

Location and sets in *mise en scène*

The setting is where and when the narrative unfolds. According to film theorist André Bazin, setting is much more important in television and

'In many respects, a film shot resembles a painting. It presents a flat array of colours and shapes. Before we even start to read the image as a three-dimensional space, *mise en scène* offers many cues for guiding our attention and emphasising elements in the frame.'

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, University of Wisconsin

film than it is in theatre. Theatre, he argues, is all about human beings: 'The drama on the screen can exist without actors. A banging door, a leaf in the wind, waves beating on the shore can heighten the dramatic effect.'

Setting

The setting establishes the place and time of the narrative.

Settings can be either natural or specially constructed for the purpose. From the setting, the audience can construct an array of meanings about the story, the characters and the genre. For instance, a Monument Valley setting immediately conjures up the Western genre.

In the *mise en scène,* the décor and props are also considered part of the setting.

Motif in *mise en scène*

A **motif** in *mise en scène* is a recurring prop or location or an actor as a shape or figure. It is repeated in the narrative and becomes significant or symbolic in some way. The word is of French origin and should not be confused with 'motive'. As part of *mise en scène*, a motif can be a way of linking aspects of the story, or revealing a character or theme. Motif also appears in editing, where it can be created with a recurring image or sound.

In *Psycho* (1960), both props and décor become motifs. The shower curtain starts as décor, but its repeated appearance makes it a motif. The newspaper initially is just a prop, but then it too is used in the narrative as a repeated symbol, thereby becoming a motif.

Table 2.2 Object-, prop- and location-based motifs in films

FILM	MOTIFS IN *MISE EN SCÈNE*
Citizen Kane (1941)	Rosebud (the object)
Vertigo (1958)	Tunnels Spirals
Psycho (1960)	Birds The newspaper The shower curtain
Jaws (1975)	Barrels
American Beauty (1999)	Roses
Minority Report (2002)	Glasses

Figure 2.30 Production designer Grant Major (far right) advises director Peter Jackson on the set of *King Kong* (2003). Setting is more important in film and television than it is in the theatre, according to film theorist André Bazin. Locations and sets establish the setting.

Alamy Stock Photo/RGR Collection

Costume and make-up

Costumes and make-up work in a similar way to setting in providing information about the place and time of the narrative. Like setting, they can be realistic or completely stylised and artificial. An example of a film with highly stylised make-up and costume is the German expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920).

Costumes and make-up are also important in the development of character. Costume changes can indicate mood changes or alterations in the status of characters. For instance, in *The Godfather* (1972), both costume and make-up are used to show the ageing of Don Corleone. Romantic comedies often use costume to indicate that a character is 'coming out of their shell'. In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), costume is used to make statements about the characters. For instance, Richie Tenenbaum, a faded tennis star, still dresses in the costume of his professional career.

Costume can indicate character role. For example, many silent films used costume to establish who was the hero and who was the villain. In modern films, minor characters are sometimes branded on the basis of costume, and their character roles become more recognisable to audiences.

Costume can also play a causal role. An article of clothing can be important in the plot, either as a clue or as a signature item. When Richie shaves off his signature moustache in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, it is symbolic, and also causative, of his final transformation.

Acting – figure placement in *mise en scène*

'I never said actors are like cattle. I said they should be treated like cattle.'

Alfred Hitchcock, director

Most definitions of *mise en scène* include acting and acting style. However, acting as an element of *mise en scène* can also be considered in a graphic sense – the actor can be considered as an object that takes up space. The actors' bodies become part of the visual field. The arrangement of that human space or territory within the frame is part of the *mise en scène*.

The blocking that directors do in rehearsal allows them to shift characters around and establish patterns of character movement. What the audience finally sees on screen can be careful and artful compositions that comment upon character relationships and help to establish the narrative.

Characters and graphic space

The space allocated to people and objects is one of the most important resources in film. 'The way that people are arranged in space can tell us a lot about their social and psychological relationships,' says Louis Giannetti, Professor Emeritus of English and Film, Case Western Reserve University. He argues that dominant characters always take up more space in the frame. This dominance refers to their importance in the narrative, not their importance in society. If the

Figure 2.31 In *Sweet Country* (2017) director Warwick Thornton chose indigenous actors not on the basis of acting experience, but on their connection to country. 'When the camera rolled, they were owning the landscape spiritually, mentally and physically', says Thornton. Arrangement of actors can be considered an aspect of *mise en scène* when the actor is considered as a figure in space. The actor becomes part of the visual field.

film is about peasants, a peasant will take up more frame space than the king, says Giannetti.

Similarly, the amount of open space in a shot can be symbolic within the *mise en scène*. A long shot with lots of clear open space suggests freedom. This can also be called loose framing. A close-up or mid-shot with lots of heavy shapes tightly framed around a character appears confining. This is also called tight framing.

Figure 2.32 A full-front character tends to create a stronger sense of intimacy with the audience. We are more likely to share their emotions rather than merely observe them.

Filming an actor in different positions can also suggest different relationships, not only with other characters but also with the audience. Louis Giannetti has identified five basic positions.

1 **Full-front** – most intimate with the audience. We tend to identify with the character, even if it is just momentarily.
2 **Quarter turn** – often used by filmmakers because it allows involvement with other characters, but it also allows the audience to feel intimate.
3 **Profile** – the characters seem to be unaware they are being observed. This is less intimate, but we are also free to stare.
4 **Three-quarter turn** – increasing remoteness, but still some degree of accessibility for the audience.
5 **Back to the camera** – least intimate for the audience and the most remote position for a character.

'It is necessary to intervene in a colour film, to take away the usual reality and replace it with the reality of the moment.'

Michelangelo Antonioni, Italian film director

Colour in *mise en scène*

Colour in film can be thought of in at least two ways:

- **Naturalism or realism**. Colour obviously reflects the real world much more closely than black and white. Because of this, colour can simply be used to reflect the world as we see it. This makes the film more likely to gain audience acceptance as being realistic.
- **Colour as spectacle**. In the early days of film, when colour first came out, it was often reserved for genres such as the musical; colour was seen to add spectacle and enthusiasm to those genres. More serious-minded genres, such as crime, kept using black and white for some considerable time.

Colour in modern movies is used both ways. It is used as a process of realism and as spectacle, in the sense of being highly symbolic.

Colour is often a subconscious element in film, says Louis Giannetti. Its appeal is emotional and expressive. Giannetti argues that people often see lines and diagonals of composition in a logical way. However, the audience often just accepts colour without noticing it. This allows colour to create atmosphere and mood subliminally.

Colours have different connotations, many of which are cultural. However, while there are cultural differences in interpretation, there is also evidence of a lot of agreement around the world about the 'temperatures' of different colours. Blues and greens tend to be seen as cool or tranquil. Reds and yellows tend to be seen as warm. In western cultures, reds can suggest violence or sex.

Cooler colours tend to fade back into the frame, whereas warm colours tend to stand out and be noticeable. Therefore, colour can be used to create dominant objects in the frame. Strong use of colour can be a compositional element.

Colour can be used as a sign of character. It can also be used as a recurring symbol or motif. For example, whenever the audience sees a certain colour, they might have particular associations.

Lighting in *mise en scène*

Lighting is considered part of the *mise en scène* because of its power to suggest ideas and emotions. Lighting helps the viewer to construct meaning. It can suggest time, place, mood or genre. Lighting is a powerful tool that directors can use to express their art.

In early cinema, natural lighting was all that was available. Filming took place outside in the sun or in studios with vast glass roofs. Some studios even had opening roofs. This partly explains why the early film studios moved to the sun-drenched California desert, and what was then the small village of Hollywood. Around this time, during the First World War (1914–18), Hollywood film studios found a peaceful use for the arc-searchlights that had been developed to spot enemy aircraft. Thus began the expressive film lighting we know today. From around 1915, Hollywood's standard three-point lighting set-up was introduced, and practice has changed very little since then.

The need to run studios like factories working around the clock was one reason that standard three-point lighting was introduced. Another was the arrival of the star system with its emphasis on glamour.

Three-point lighting

In standard three-point lighting there are three main positions for the lights:

- **Key light.** This is the hardest and brightest light and is focused slightly to one side of the main subject. The key light is normally the main source of illumination.
- **Fill light.** This is a softer, more diffuse light that is placed slightly to the other side of the main subject at about the same angle as the key light. The fill light fills in the shadows cast by the key light.

2.4.3
Standard
three-point
lighting rule

- **Backlight.** This is placed behind the subject and works to separate the subject from the background. If the subject is against a wall, the backlight creates a sense of three-dimensional distance or separation, preventing the subject from being 'plastered' to the wall by the intensity of the two main lights. Backlights are usually hard lights to better create an outline around the subject.

Three-point lighting is used in most situations even today. Audiences now accept it as natural looking, yet it also has the effect of glamorising its subjects.
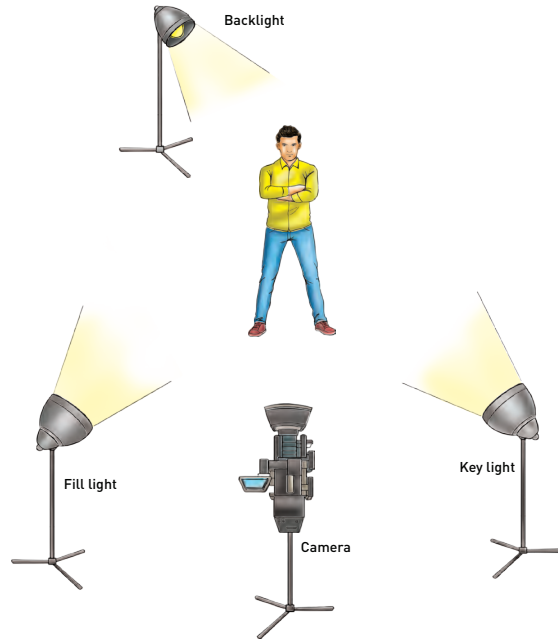

Figure 2.33 The layout for standard three-point lighting. In practice, the lights may need to be moved around somewhat until the shadows have been reduced.

Two-point: K, F – Key light (RH) and fill. 'Broad lighting' directs the key light to the wider side of the face.

Two-point: K, F – Key light (LH) and fill. 'Short lighting' uses the fill light on the more visible side of the face area.

Three-point: K, F, B – Daylight-coloured backlight is added to the key and the fill, separating the subject from the background.

Three-point: K, F, B – Contrasting warm-coloured tungsten backlight lifts the hair colour from the background even more.

Two-point: K, B – Key light and backlight only leave a darker line when the fill is removed.

Two-point: F, B – Backlight and fill reduces modelling on the face.

One-point: B – Backlight only shows the work an individual light does within a three-point set up.

Figure 2.34 The key light may be placed to mimic a genuine light source direction. Distance can be used to fine tune the brightness of the fill light, and the backlight must not shine directly into the camera lens. Each light should be individually cut to check the contribution it makes.

2.4 ACTIVITIES

1   Select a film in which setting is an important element of *mise en scène*. Horror movies, Westerns and road movies are genres that particularly use setting as *mise en scène*. However, do not limit yourself to this list.
    Explain how the *mise en scène* builds the progression narrative. **Identify** the ways that the setting interacts with the characters, **providing examples** to clarify your explanation.

2   Research some of the cultural connotations of the main colours. Find a film example where a chosen colour is used as a theme or motif.
    Explain the director's use of colour in the film. Provide **additional information** based on your research and **illustrate** it with the usage of colour in the film, **explaining** the effect the director seemed to be promoting.

3   Select a still from a movie of your choice.
    Analyse the *mise en scène*, **examining** each element that makes up its **constituent parts**. **Make a judgement** about its effectiveness, considering setting, costume, make-up, acting and lighting. Present your analysis to the class, showing the chosen image as you speak.

4   **Analyse** a still from a movie in which the actors appear to have important 'figure placement' as part of *mise en scène*. **Examine** dominant and subordinate characters based on the space they are allocated in the shot. **Consider** the position of characters in relation to the rule of thirds. **Consider** what might have been the effect if the director had placed the characters differently. Discuss how this would alter character relationships and possibly the narrative. **Make a judgement** about the effectiveness of the placements, using character role and importance as the **criteria**.

5   View short segments from one or more of the following films. Each is noted for its significant or historical use of colour. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Pleasantville* (1998), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Rumble Fish* (1983), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), *Wings of Desire* (1987), *Vertigo* (1958), *Amélie* (2001), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Big Fish* (2003), *Corpse Bride* (2005). Alternatively, select a film of your own choice.
    Explain how colour was used in the film in new or different ways, **illustrating** and **exemplifying** how colour becomes a symbolic code. Present your commentary to the class with the film segment playing in the background (sound off).

6   Examine the lighting in a shot from a black and white *film noir* (see page 217).
    Explain how the use of light and shade is important to the narrative or develops a sense of character. **Identify** the justifications that are offered for the source of the light.
    Analyse how the different elements of light and shade contribute to the development of the narrative. **Examine** each in detail and consider how they interact.
    Appraise whether you think this use of light is realistic or disruptive. What effect might the scene have if ordinary studio lighting was used? **Draw conclusions** about the role of lighting in these kinds of films.

EDITING CODES AND CONVENTIONS

2.5.1
Cuts &
Transitions
101

A Hollywood movie contains between 800 and 1200 shots. For a narrative movie, the shooting ratio of filmed rushes to final selection is usually about 8:1. However, news and documentary genres, being less tightly planned than films, can have shooting ratios as high as 20:1. Editing is often thought of as a process of cutting down. However, editing can also be seen as a means of building up a story. Both are valid approaches.

In its simplest form, editing may be defined as the process of coordinating one shot with the next. This process of coordination of units of vision and sound creates the cause-and-effect chain of events in time and space that is the narrative. Editing is a process of combining images so they play off each other and create meaning.

Juxtaposition of shots

It is said the founders of film, the Lumière brothers, stumbled on one of the techniques of editing quite by accident. The camera broke down in the middle of filming. When they got it going again, they found the jump in **continuity** actually looked good. **Juxtapositioning** had been discovered.

Figure 2.35 Auguste and Louis Lumière (whose surname means 'light') are considered the founders of film.

Juxtapositioning of shots simply means the placing of shots side by side. The shots interact with each other and create certain meanings. The selection and sequence of shots has an impact on the audience's understanding of the message. Traditional Hollywood productions begin with a juxtapositioning of certain shot sizes. The opening sequence usually runs from an extreme long shot (ELS) through medium shot (MS) to close-up (CU).

Kuleshov effect

In the early 1920s, the film industry in Soviet Russia was very advanced and well funded. A number of experimental techniques were developed for the industry at the time that became the basis of much modern filmmaking. One such experimental technique was developed by Lev Kuleshov, a Russian film teacher.

The 'Kuleshov effect' is a montage effect demonstrated in the 1920s by Russian filmmaker Kuleshov, who showed how audiences can make different inferences about a shot depending on the shots with which it is intercut – this has become a central principle of modern editing.

The experiments

Kuleshov wanted to show that the meaning of a shot was significantly determined by the meaning of the surrounding shots. He invited passers-by off the streets to view short sequences of film, and then asked for their reactions.

- **The soup bowl experiments.** Kuleshov took a series of shots of a famous Russian actor named Ivan Mozzhukhin looking as calm and neutral as possible. He then cut these shots together with shots of a bowl of soup, a girl in a coffin and a (supposedly naked) woman on a sofa. In each case, the audience members thought the actor was experiencing a different emotion – hunger, grief or desire. The audience is said to have 'raved' about his acting, yet Mozzhukhin's image was exactly the same.
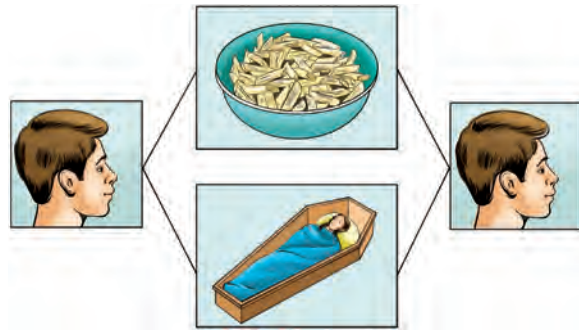

Figure 2.36 The actor's expression was neutral, but the meanings for the audience depended on the shot that was edited in – hunger or grief.

- **The White House experiment.** In what Kuleshov called 'creative geography', he took shots of a man walking from right to left across the frame in one street in Moscow, and a woman walking from left to right in another street. A third shot showed them meeting somewhere else and shaking hands. The man then points into the area off screen. Kuleshov cut into this series some shots of the White House in Washington, DC, in the United States. The audience believed the actors were actually in Washington.
- **The jigsaw woman.** To further demonstrate the Kuleshov effect, a shot of a woman was created out of images of the face, body, hands and legs of several different women.

Kuleshov believed his experiments proved that film had its own system of meaning that could be manipulated in a way that was unique to moving-image media. Time and space become the creation of the editing process.

Soviet montage/collision of images

One of Kuleshov's students was Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Film historians credit Eisenstein with developing modern editing. Although he made only seven films, his influence has been greater than almost any other film director in film history. Eisenstein developed the montage approach to editing.

'Montage' is the process of using a collision of images to create an idea in the minds of the audience. Each image contains ideas and meanings. If separate shots with different meanings are placed side by side, even if they mean opposite things, then a third meaning can arise.
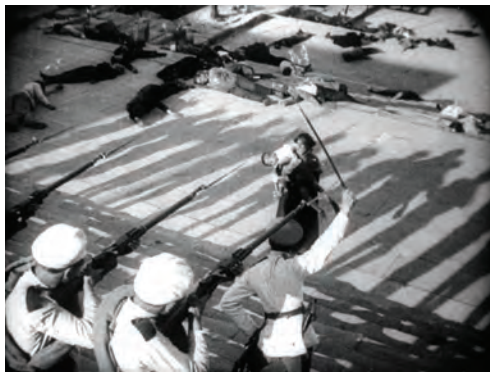

Figure 2.37 Sergei Eisenstein's most famous film is *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

Figure 2.38 Six shots from the Odessa steps sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The collision of these apparently unrelated shots of soldiers, guns, bodies and a woman carrying a dead child create a powerful emotional response in the audience. The technique is called montage.

Collision of images was the basis of most scenes involving violence before the arrival of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in the 1990s. A classic scene might be a shooting. Imagine a shot of a man lying on the ground; next to this imagine a shot of another man holding a gun. Neither shot on its own indicates that a murder has occurred. However, the collision of the two independent images suggests this third meaning.

Eisenstein developed the theory of montage from the Kuleshov effect. He was also influenced by Japanese character-writing or pictographs. In Japanese writing, the intended idea might come from putting two symbols together, but the outcome is more than the sum of the parts. For example:

- child + mouth = scream (not 'child's mouth')
- bird + mouth = sing
- dog + mouth = bark

Eisenstein worked with a film movement called **Soviet montage**. His technique became known as Soviet montage as well, to separate it from 'American montage'. Sometimes Eisenstein's technique is referred to as dialectical montage. 'Dialectic' is a term meaning a collision of opposing ideas.

Montage proved to be one of the most important developments of early cinema. Collision of images has formed the basis of almost all Hollywood special effects up to the development of computer-generated imagery.

Editing as continuity

Editing involves a dilemma. The break between one shot and another interrupts the audience's attention. Each cut is a small jolt for the viewer. Every time a cut is made, there is a risk that the viewer will be brought back to reality. On the other hand, there is no other way of constructing a film. The filmmaker's problem is how to use editing, yet also control its disruptive power.

Classical Hollywood continuity editing

Continuity editing, favoured during the Golden Age of Hollywood, is sometimes called 'the invisible style'. It has the following features:

- **Shot progressions in the classical Hollywood style** – ELS, LS, MS, CU
- **Continuity cutting** – for example, cutting on action or movement to distract the viewer

- **Matching techniques** to hide cuts – for instance, eyelines are matched
- **Transitions such as dissolves** to smooth the remaining joins where necessary
- **Simultaneous time/parallel editing** (cross-cutting)
- **Point-of-view shots** – shot/reverse shot when filming conversation
- **Application of the 180-degree rule**
- **Use of standard three-point lighting** to naturalise appearances
- **Use of music** that is subservient to the story, reinforcing the meaning.

American montage

Hollywood directors commonly refer to montage as a series of shots that condense time. In early film, the classic American montage sequence might be a shot of calendar pages peeling off and blowing away as a character goes through a series of actions that might have taken months or years – such as growing up. American montages are also often used in training sequences to show a character getting more and more skilled. A famous example of American montage occurs in the British romantic comedy film *Notting Hill* (1999) during the marketplace scene when William Thacker (Hugh Grant) has just broken up with Anna Scott (Julia Roberts). A year without his girlfriend goes past as he walks through four seasons of the marketplace from summer through to winter and back to summer. The song 'Ain't No Sunshine' by Bill Withers plays throughout the scene, uniting the montage.

Cross-cutting (simultaneous time/parallel editing)

Cross-cutting (also known as simultaneous time or parallel editing) is the editing technique of cutting between scenes that are happening at the same time (simultaneously), but in different locations. Cross-cutting gives the audience extra knowledge that the characters do not have, because the audience can see alternating shots of each scene. As a result, the audience experiences suspense.

Early filmmaker DW Griffith was one of the first to use cross-cutting in his famous 'last-minute rescue' scenes. As a result, the cliché of cross-cutting is the damsel tied to the railroad tracks while the train approaches and the hero rides to her rescue.

A rule of thumb in cross-cutting is that the action in the separate scenes must eventually come together. In the clichéd example given, there must be a scene in which the train, the damsel and the hero are all together.

Many films rely on cross-cutting as an important feature of the film's narrative. Examples include Steven Spielberg's first film *Duel* (1971), which cuts between a car and a menacing truck; *Jeepers Creepers* (2001), cutting between a car and a demonic vintage vehicle; and *Run Lola Run* (1998), cutting between a young woman extorting money and a young man about to hold up a supermarket.

Alamy Stock Photo/Entertainment Pictures

Figure 2.39 *Run Lola Run* (1998) relies on cross-cutting to develop the narrative.

Although creating suspense is one of the most common uses of cross-cutting, it does have other uses. Cross-cutting can be used to draw parallels or to create contrasts. For instance, showing images of wealth cross-cut with scenes of poverty can make the injustice much more apparent. Cross-cutting to create a contrast was used in a memorable scene from *The Godfather* (1972). At a baptism, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) accepts God and renounces Satan. Cross-cut with this scene, we see Corleone's henchman violently executing his enemies one by one.

Transitions: visual punctuation

2.5.2
Sherlock -
How creative
transitions
improve
storytelling

The devices used to shift from one scene to another provide the equivalent of punctuation. They convey certain impressions. They also assist understanding and help to make meaning clear. Audiences learn to make meaning from these visual language conventions because they are constantly repeated.

Following are some devices used as 'visual punctuation'.

Cut

A cut is an instant change to another shot. In real life, this is similar to an abrupt change of attention – when we suddenly decide to inspect something else. A cut is the least obvious transition because it occurs so quickly and seems to work naturally. A cut can be regarded as the shortest distance between two shots.

However, there should be a reason for the cut, so the audience feels they want to look at the next shot. The motivation might be provided by the dialogue or an action from a character. Cutting on action is common because the movement in the shot distracts attention from the shot change. Cutting on dialogue seems natural because the audience naturally wants to see each person speak.

Dissolve

During a dissolve, one image gradually blends or dissolves into another. A dissolve is a longer route between two shots than a cut. For this reason, it introduces greater disruption. It can represent a dramatic pause. In a narrative genre, a dissolve can be used to suggest a smooth and gentle change in time or place.

Fade

A fade-out gradually fades the picture to an empty or black screen. A fade-in begins with a black screen and gradually reveals a picture. The fade is an obvious and disruptive transition. It signals a major change in the progress of the text. It is often compared to the curtain in a stage theatre, which opens and closes the show and separates the acts. The fade is the longest route between shots.

Defocus

Defocus shots provide transitions by gradually moving out of focus on one scene and refocusing on another. They are similar in character to the dissolve and are a more gradual way of easing the audience from one shot to another.

Wipe

During a wipe, a new image 'wipes' across the old one using a defined line. Digital effects switchers allow for a huge variety of wipes, including the flip frame and the page leaf. A wipe is the most

unnatural transition and consequently is the most obvious to the audience. It is commonly used in those genres that allow for disjointed presentation, such as news, documentaries and sports coverage.

Some cutting rules

Experienced filmmakers have some general rules that help to maintain the invisible style of classical Hollywood editing.

Jump cut

A **jump cut** occurs when a cut is made from one shot to another of the same subject without any real change in camera position or shot size. It is called a jump cut because usually some time has passed and the subject of the shot is doing something different, or is perhaps just shown in different lighting; the result is a perceptible jump that breaks the sense of continuity. In classical editing style, the jump cut is regarded as poor form. However, many modern filmmakers use the jump cut as a deliberate technique to jolt the audience, or to increase the sense of unreality or chaos. The deliberate use of jump cuts in this way was first popularised in the French New Wave films of directors such as Jean-Luc Godard – most famously in his film *Breathless* (1960). Deliberate use of jump cuts is seen in the Guy Ritchie film *Snatch* (2000), and during the shaving scene in *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001).

30-degree rule

Classical Hollywood editing style suggests that the camera should be moved at least 30 degrees away from its previous position when shooting the same subject to avoid a jump cut and appear **seamless**. Some editors demand that the camera should also change shot size, for example from a mid-shot to a close-up.

180-degree rule

One of the biggest sins against classical Hollywood editing style is to 'cross the line'. The line refers to the 180-degree line of interest between actors (or sometimes objects, such as moving trains or cars). Cameras should be placed or moved behind one side of the line only. Cameras should not be placed on opposite sides of the line. If they are, it looks like the characters have reversed the direction they are

facing. The 180-degree rule is a function of screen geography (see page 207).

Cutaways and cut-ins

Two useful editing techniques are cutaways and cut-ins.

- **Cutaway.** A cutaway is a shot of something other than the main action that can be inserted to hide a jump cut, or to condense action. These shots are therefore cuts *away* from the main action to something related, but different. Sporting coverage often uses cutaways to audience members in order to compress time or make the action appear quicker. In films or television, directors often insist that camera operators get shots of general activity around the main action, so that these shots can be used as cutaways. For example, if two characters are walking down the street, the camera operator might collect cutaway shots of street art, shop windows, kids playing, buskers, stray dogs and so on. These could be inserted to hide cuts in conversation or to speed up the action without the audience noticing.
- **Cut-in.** A cut-in shot is used for the same purposes as a cutaway, except that it represents a further cut into the action – usually with a mid-shot or close-up. A cut-in can also be used to hide a jump cut or to compress time. For example, in a scene involving characters walking down the street, the camera operator may have picked up some shots of one of the actors taking a drink from a bottle, or looking at a watch, or pushing their hair away. These shots represent a cut *in* to the main action, but could be especially useful if the editor needs to shorten the conversation between the characters and wants to cover up the cut.

Shooting ratio

The **shooting ratio** is the total amount of footage shot compared with the actual length of the completed production. The ratio varies widely between different productions depending on the overall budget and the type of finished product.

It is said that there were 31 miles (50 kilometres) of celluloid film shot for the classic film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). However, most modern drama productions have a shooting ratio of between

5:1 and 15:1. The shooting ratio in a drama can depend on a number of factors apart from budget. These could include shot coverage of conversations, the number of takes, the number of scenes and the number of camera angles. Nonfiction programming, such as reality television, news or documentaries, tends to have quite high shooting ratios.

Shooting on digital cameras has meant that shooting ratios have risen across all types of productions. This is because digital footage is inexpensive. With more footage, the editor has more 'room to move'; although the downside of this is that there is also a lot of footage to sort through and log.

2.5 ACTIVITIES

1   View some action films and find examples of collision of images. Take a still of each image that makes up part of the technique.
    Explain how the collision of images sequence works. Provide **additional information** about each image in the sequence describing what the viewer sees. **Identify** the shot sizes and the arrangement of the people and objects in the frame. **Clarify** how the sequence works as a set of **codes and conventions**.

2   Record some examples of visual language punctuation (transitional devices), using them to **illustrate and exemplify** at least three of the techniques. Present them to the class.
    Explain their purpose and effect, **recognising the particular qualities and characteristics** of each.

3   Manipulate time in a short filmed sequence. Film an event where time is an important factor and then edit the footage into a short sequence. You could try an American montage to compress time, or film a moment of shock or extreme tension to expand time.
    Structure the sequence **systematically** to expand or compress time to create the desired effect. Provide **reasoning** for your choices in a brief written response after you have edited.

4   The use of cross-editing (simultaneous time/parallel editing) has changed over time. Compare the use of simultaneous time (S.T.) in the scenes involving the truck chasing the car in Steven Spielberg's *Duel* (1971) and in *Jeepers Creepers* (2001).

EXPLAIN	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Explain how the S.T. sequence works in the two movies. **Give information** about each of the movies and the events in the S.T. sequence.	**Analyse** the climactic scene in each sequence, **examining** each movie and: • **considering** the effect of each cut back and forth • **examining** screen geography • **considering** the use of any special effects. **Analyse** the **strengths and limitations** of each S.T. sequence with the sense of threat and audience excitement as the **criteria**.	**Appraise** the effectiveness of each sequence, **drawing conclusions** about the **significance** of each of these to the audiences at the time of movie release, and to modern audiences today.

5   Re-film some of Kuleshov's early experiments and test them on an audience who is not aware of the intended purpose.
    Structure two to three sequences using Kuleshov's original ideas as the basis for your own experiments, **making adaptations** to suit your purposes.
    Explain the findings of your Kuleshov experiments in a presentation to the class, **providing information** about the survey audience and their responses to the footage.

6   Film a short (10- to 15-shot) video sequence on a topic of your own choice. The sequence should attempt at least one example of each of the following:
    • **Structure** an edited sequence using collision of images to create an idea that isn't in either shot.
    • **Structure** a sequence of simultaneous time created by cross-cutting, with the two sets of action coming together in the last scene.
    • **Structure** into the sequences at least two different types of transitional devices.

SOUND CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Sound creates the feeling that you are in a 360-degree world that extends far beyond the frame and surrounds you in your seat. Movies have never been without sound. Even in the silent film era, there was always musical accompaniment. Sound is fundamental to creating the world of the story.

Figure 2.40 There never really was a truly 'silent era' of mass audience film. So-called silent films always had a musical accompaniment. Sound has been a partner with vision in creating a story world for audiences since the beginning.

Elements of sound

2.6.1
Designing
sound

Sound has three elements in film and television: dialogue, music and sound effects.

Dialogue and voice-over

The main sound we hear in film and television is the human voice. Dialogue and voice-over move the narrative forwards. Without the human voice, we would not know what the characters were thinking, feeling or hoping to do. Dialogue and voice-over make the following apparent to the audience:

- character motivations
- character response to events in the cause-and-effect chain
- character relationships
- conflict with sources of opposition and blockage.
  Both dialogue and voice-over are said to work best when they are not the exact mirrors of what the audience can already see in the image. In other words, dialogue should not state the obvious.

Dialogue

Dialogue is defined as what is spoken by the actors, and only happens in the story world. It is such a

powerful element of film sound that it is rarely trumped in volume by music or sound effects. Dialogue almost always takes precedence over the other elements.

There can be two extremes of television and film dialogue. At one end of the spectrum is highly staged theatrical dialogue. At the other end is mood dialogue in which it is the characterisation the words convey, rather than the words themselves, that is important. Most modern dialogue is a blend of the two.

Dialogue is important in establishing character. The way someone talks reveals their background, culture, age, authority and social class. Dialogue also reveals the character's emotional response to events.

Voice-over

Voice-over is narration that is heard only by the audience. Voice-over narration allows the director to guide the audience through events that might be too hard to understand otherwise. There are two types of voice-over:

- **Subjective voice-over.** This gives the audience access to the inner world of a character. For example, in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) we listen to the character Joe Gillis reflect on the events that led up to his murder. *American Beauty* (1999) uses voice-over in a similar way. *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) uses voice-over to give insight into other characters. *True Grit* (2010) uses voice-over to explain character motivation. A documentary uses subjective voice-over when the filmmaker involves themselves in the action.
- **Objective voice-over.** An objective voice-over is a narrator who is not one of the characters in the story. Objective voice-over is less common in modern films. Objective voice-over is commonly used in documentaries.
  Voice-over is said to work best in films where the audience can still follow the story without it. Instead, the voice-over works as a kind of commentary that provides additional insights.

Aspects of voice

There are four key qualities that give the human voice its power, say Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis of North Carolina State University.
1 **Volume.** A louder voice usually indicates more emotional intensity, suggesting that a character may be experiencing anger, fear or

passion. Softness can suggest tenderness or even sneakiness.

2   **Pitch.** This is the frequency of a voice – whether it is high or low. Deep voices are often associated with power or authority. However, they can also be associated with evil or menace. High-pitched voices can convey weakness or fear.

3   **Speech qualities.** The way a character speaks says a lot about them. The following are important aspects of speech quality:

- **Accent and dialect.** These can indicate cultural background and social class. A character's accent can also explain setting and even character motivation.
- **Diction.** The choice of words that come out of a character's mouth, and the way they are said, are both very revealing.
- **Vocal signature.** The actual sound and rhythm of an actor's voice may be important in creating character. Many actors have signature styles of speaking.

4   **Acoustic qualities.** The way a voice sounds can indicate the location and setting. It can also suggest distance between characters. Sound engineers working on a film can manipulate the acoustic qualities of the voice to create the right perspective and degree of warmth.

- **Sound perspective.** The sound perspective lets the audience know how far away a sound is. It also tells the audience what kind of environment the sound is travelling through. For example, there could be an echo if the sound is travelling through an empty room.

Figure 2.41 A film crew recording dialogue. Notice how the mike on the end of the boom pole is held just above the characters but just outside the frame of the movie shot. The large foam 'zeppelin' or 'windjammer' that the mike is contained within is designed to reduce wind noise.

Sound effects

Sound effects and background noises help create a sense of reality in a visual text. They also build the idea of a real space in which the action is taking place. They give character to the environment. The following are the ways in which sound effects are used to build a scene:

- **Defining location.** Sound allows the audience to identify the location. Sometimes this can just be a generic location, such as a city. At other times, a particular sound may mean a specific location.
- **Lending mood.** Sound can have an emotional effect on the audience's response to a scene. It can build the sense of mood in a scene. For example, horror movies often add the sounds of violent thunderstorms to provoke fear in the audience.

Figure 2.42 *Apocalypse Now* (1979, R-rated) opens with a shot of some jungle. A fluttering sound is heard and moments later it is identified by the silhouette of a military helicopter. Seconds later the forest explodes in flames of napalm. The Doors song 'The End' begins simultaneously. In this opening sequence, the sound has immediately defined the location in a very specific way. The music has established the mood and the theme.

- **Signalling impact on characters**. It is very common for sound to be used to show how characters are being affected by the action. The sound seems to stand for how the characters feel. For example, in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), a crop duster plane is heard humming in the background, but as it approaches the character Thornhill, the sound gets louder and louder and then the plane begins firing bullets. The rising sound makes us feel his panic.

Music

The power of music to manipulate emotions has always been acknowledged. It is often the music that makes an image come alive, producing an effect in combination with the image that is greater than each element on its own.

In modern movies, popular songs are used more often than scored orchestral tracks. These have the advantage of bringing to mind other cultural meanings and connotations. Popular music can suggest a time period or even a location. Popular music lyrics can also be used to underscore the meaning of the image or dialogue. What the singer is saying is commenting on what the audience can see.

Sound sources

The Greek word 'diegesis' was used by Aristotle to describe the world of the story that is created by the text. In movies, the diegesis is the fictional world that is shown on screen. This fictional world of the diegesis is the one experienced by the characters. It is not the same as the world experienced by the audience, which may include other elements such as orchestral music or voice-over narration. The diegesis can include all of the events that the characters in the story experience, whether in the past, present or future. Thus, the diegesis of a soap opera would include the 'bible' that outlines all the character histories as well as their likely future paths.

In television or film, sound can come from one of only two sources. It either comes from inside the story or it happens outside the story. These two sources of sound are labelled diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

Diegetic sound: in the story world

Sound from within the story is called **diegetic sound** because it happens inside the diegesis (the world of the story). This means the story characters, as well as the audience, must be able to hear the sound. It could be a gunshot, or it could be music from a radio in the scene, for example. Usually the audience can see the source of the sound. Diegetic sound comes from the on-screen action that we observe and that the characters participate in. There are two types of diegetic sound:

1 **External diegetic sound.** This is sound that has an external source in the world of the story. A character is talking, for example, or a gun is fired.
2 **Internal diegetic sound.** This is sound that is still in the world of the story, but comes from inside the mind of a character. Just as we cannot hear another person's thoughts in real life, internal diegetic is not available to other characters.

Non-diegetic sound: outside the story world

Sound that is imported into the movie but is not related to the on-screen action is called **non-diegetic sound**. Non-diegetic sound may contribute to the story or it may build atmosphere or enhance the emotional power of a scene, but its source is not seen on screen. If the characters cannot hear it, it is non-diegetic. Voice-overs and narration are non-diegetic sound.

Types of sound

Two types of sound are used in the visual language of television and film. Film theorists have come up with a variety of terms for these types of sound. For example, Karel Reisz uses the terms 'synchronous' and 'asynchronous'. James Monaco uses 'parallel' and 'contrapuntal'. Monaco argues that music, sound effects and speech can either work with the image or comment on it.

Parallel sound

Parallel sound (or synchronous sound) is logically connected with the image. The sound comes from within the scene or emphasises some aspect of the scene. The classical style of Hollywood's Golden Age relied on parallel sound, using music, sound effects and dialogue to underline and support the image.

Contrapuntal sound

Contrapuntal sound (or asynchronous sound) provides a commentary on the image and may be unconnected to it. The sound may work against the image to create a third meaning. Contrapuntal sound can come from outside the scene. Stanley Kubrick's films *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) both use contrapuntal music. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Beethoven's symphonies are contrasted with futuristic scenes of stylised violence. Hitchcock used contrapuntal sound in *Psycho* (1960). Scenes of apparent ordinariness were given high tension through the use of a disturbing orchestral soundtrack.

Transitions for sound editing

Sound editing has fewer transition choices than vision editing.

- The **fade** is the most important sound transition. A fade-out is a gradual decrease in volume until eventual silence. A fade-in is a gradual increase in volume. In sound, a fade can represent an easy means of starting or finishing something. It gives the impression of infinity, or that the sound is going on forever somewhere if only the audience could hear it. A fade can also mean that a sound is moving closer or further away.

  Audiences will accept almost any change in sound as long as it is gradually faded in or out. This is why sound editing is often not noticed as readily as vision editing. Since the fade is so common, audiences expect gentle transitions as a matter of course.
- The **cut** is not as readily accepted by audiences for sound productions. As a result, the most common use of a cut in sound editing is to create a sudden shock. Sharp sounds, explosions, door slams and so on are useful ways of suddenly cutting from one sound to another.
- A **segue** (pronounced *seg-way*) is a smooth transition from one piece of music or sequence of sounds to another. It is rather like a dissolve in vision editing. Segues are usually achieved by first matching the beat of two sound sequences, and then fading down one sequence and fading up the other.
- A **sound bridge** occurs when sound from one scene is carried over into another. This is why sound bridge is also called **overlapping sound**. The sound can be overlapped either before or after a scene.

2.6 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a movie that you are very familiar with. Identify two or three highly climactic points in the movie. **Explain** the nature of the music at these points. **Clarify** how the music makes you feel and describe your own reactions to the sound at these points.
   Explain how the sound supports the progress of the narrative and the filmed action.

2 **Construct** your own top five, all-time, best voice-over narrated movie openings of the 21st century. Collect sample openings from online sources. Play them to the class.
   Explain why you think the voice-over is so good, referring to the features of dialogue in this textbook.
   Identify the different elements of voice-over and **explain** how they work in each example.

3 **Construct** a list of actors you would employ on the basis of their voice quality.
   Explain your reasons for including them in the list, describing their voice, and **provide additional information** that **illustrates** these qualities (for example, other roles they have played). **Identify** some suitable new roles for them.

4 Find a movie scene in which a sound effect is used to establish location. Decide whether this sound effect establishes a generic location (for example, a city somewhere) or a very specific location.
   Explain the elements of the sound effect that work to suggest either generic or specific location, **identifying particular characteristics** of both the sound and the location.

5 Create a quiz for your class based on selected scenes from movies. The scenes should contain either diegetic or non-diegetic sound. They should also contain parallel (synchronous) and contrapuntal (asynchronous) sound. Play each scene and ask the class to **identify** which type of sound it is.
   Explain the reasons for the answer yourself or ask the class members to do it.
   The person with the most correct answers is the winner.

6   There are four key qualities of the human voice. For each quality, find an example in a film. With these in mind, respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

EXPLAIN	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Explain how the voice quality is illustrated in the example you have given. Identify possible reasons the director may have sought out these qualities.	Analyse the narrative purpose behind the choice of voice quality, examining story needs of the movie and considering the effect of each quality.	Appraise the effectiveness of each quality, drawing conclusions about the significance of each of these to the audience.

MUSIC IN MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA

Music in film is sometimes considered (or even dismissed) as just a background element to support everything else. However, music can add cohesion to a scene by filling the silences in between dialogue, or it can provide a convenient sound transition between scenes. The soundtrack is often composed to complement the imagery, but not be so noticeable to an audience that it detracts from the rest of the action.

Functions of music

In addition to playing a supporting role to the visual elements in a film, music can also enhance the narrative, or create extra layers of meaning and emotion for an audience. Music can contribute to the complexity of the film in five main ways, according to film scholars Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis. Film music can establish historical context, represent space, define characters, shape mood or provide a distanced or ironic commentary on a scene's visual information.

1   Establish historical context

A resourceful way for a filmmaker to establish a time period in a film is to use music that was either composed or popular in that era. If the music is diegetic, this historical context can be further supported through the means of performance or sound delivery. For example, if music is playing from a mobile phone or other digital device, depending on the style of the technology, this suggests the film is set from the mid-2000s onwards.

Alamy Stock Photo/A.F. Archive

Figure 2.43 A mulleted Adam Sandler fronts a cover band in *The Wedding Singer* (1998). The opening song 'You Spin Me Right Round' (1985) is immediately recognisable to an audience as a classic 1980s tune. This performance, combined with the *mise en scène*, quickly establishes the setting of the film.

2   Represent a scene's geographical space

The geography and locations of a setting can also be distinguished through diegetic music. For example, as a character moves from a loud party scene to another room, the music dims in volume to reflect the room's proximity to the party. Film music can also suggest a country or region. In the *Braveheart* (1995) soundtrack, the symphony orchestra sound is augmented by the use of traditional Celtic instruments such as uilleann pipes, Irish whistle and bodhrán.

3   Define characters

The type of music favoured by a character can contribute to that character's representation. A character's musical taste, or the musical motifs associated with a character through a non-diegetic soundtrack, can signify their personality or importance in the narrative. The term 'leitmotif', first used to describe a technique in Richard Wagner's operas, is a melodic phrase that is associated with a particular person, situation or idea. Composer John Williams often used the **leitmotif** technique in his orchestral

2.7.1
Leitmotif

scores to link a particular melodic idea with a character. Decades later, many people can still hum 'The Imperial March' that is associated with Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* franchise, or the triumphant 'The Raider's March' in the *Indiana Jones* franchise.

Figure 2.44 Muriel sits alone her bedroom, listening to 'Dancing Queen' by ABBA and dreaming of a different life in *Muriel's Wedding* (1994). Despite being an 'uncool' choice, Muriel's favourite band is ABBA, and their music is used throughout the film. 'Dancing Queen' serves as a motif signalling key moments in Muriel's story.

4   Shape mood

Music plays a powerful role in how audiences 'read' a scene or react emotionally. Film music can reinforce the heartache of unrequited love or have the audience on the edge of their seats, waiting for something bad to happen. In the 1998 film *The Truman Show*, this effect is illustrated 'live' as the fictional executive producer, Christof, directs a scene for the reality show. As Truman hugs his long-lost father, the simple lamenting, almost questioning piano melody is combined with soaring violins. Christof directs his editors and composer to increase the volume of the music to cue the audience's emotions.

5   Provide a distanced or ironic commentary on a scene's visual information

The contrast between sound and image is sometimes manipulated by filmmakers to make a point or draw attention to a particular moment. In *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003), Pippin is commanded to sing to entertain Denethor. As the moving refrain continues, this scene cross-cuts between close-up shots of Denethor as he feasts, men riding into battle, the Orcs preparing to annihilate them, and Pippin's reluctant performance. The disgusting, ravenous feasting is in stark juxtaposition to the beautiful song, and it suggests how indifferent Denethor is to the people he's sending to their deaths.

Figure 2.45 *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) characters are being processed for incarceration at a high-security prison. Peter Quill (aka Star-Lord) confronts a prison guard for using his Walkman, Peter's most prized possession. The prison guard tasers Peter into submission to the tune of Blue Swede's 'Hooked on a Feeling' (1973). This upbeat 1970s rock number distances the audience from the violence and also highlights that Peter's treatment is the exact opposite of a 'loving feeling'.

Attributes of film music

When unaccustomed to studying music, it can be easy to fall into the trap of using ambiguous or simple terms such as 'passionate' or 'scary' to describe film music. However, Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis argue that even non-musicians can still analyse and write about film music by focusing on five key attributes of film music: patterns of development, lyrical content, tempo and volume, instrumentation and cultural significance.

1   Patterns of development

Musical motifs can be associated with a character, place or idea. Musical themes are repeated during a film where they signify important character or plot developments. Melodic motifs can also be

used to foreshadow events in a film or film series. For example, in *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), Anakin Skywalker fails to rescue his mother alive and lays waste to the sand people in a fit of rage. Yoda feels this disturbance in the force, and the main theme from 'The Imperial March' is clearly audible in the soundtrack. This motif reinforces Anakin's struggle with the dark side and foreshadows his character development in the following *Star Wars* instalments.

Figure 2.46 The song 'Young and Beautiful' by Lana Del Ray was used as a reccurring theme throughout *The Great Gatsby* (2013). The haunting melody and refrain symbolise the intense longing of both Daisy and Gatsby. The melody becomes a motif in the film and is woven into Craig Armstrong's score. The song is even used as an up-tempo foxtrot and performed by a jazz ensemble at one of Gatsby's grand parties.

2 Lyrical content

From the 1960s onwards, some filmmakers started to use individual popular songs in their film soundtracks instead of the traditional scored orchestral works. The lyrics of the song usually (but not always) support the visuals in some way.

3 Tempo and volume

The tempo (speed) and volume of film music can contribute to the pace and energy of a scene. For example, chase scenes in films are often accompanied by loud, up-tempo music to reinforce the sense of danger and excitement for an audience. The tempo of a soundtrack usually links to a character's movement, whereas the volume of music often symbolises the space (emotionally and physically) around a character.

4 Instrumentation

Even for those not completely familiar with specific orchestral instruments, terms such as 'low brass', 'percussion', or 'high strings' are more descriptive and useful in analysing film music than just saying 'the orchestra'. The type of ensemble that is creating the music is also important in creating specific sounds. For example, a film score played by a symphony orchestra has a very different sound to a rock band.

5 Cultural significance

Audiences can derive additional meaning from a scene through the intertextual references in the soundtrack. When audiences make an intertextual link, this can lead to further enjoyment or a feeling of superiority at understanding references that give extra meaning. In *The Matrix* (1999), when Neo first arrives at the Oracle's home, an instrumental version of a traditional jazz standard is playing in the background. For audiences who recognise the tune as Duke Ellington's 'I'm Beginning to See the Light' (1944), this adds additional meaning to the scene as Neo is about to learn pivotal information that influences his development as the 'saviour'.

The background of the song 'The Show Must Go On' in *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) carries extra cultural significance. Satine is dying from consumption in the film, while in real life the song is about the effort of the lead singer of the band Queen in continuing to perform despite being seriously ill. At the time, Freddie Mercury was dying of AIDS, although his illness had not yet been made public in spite of ongoing media speculation.

2.7 ACTIVITIES

1 **Explain** the type of music used for a selection of film soundtracks. Are the soundtracks orchestral? Electronic? Rock music? Popular songs with lyrics? A mixture?
2 For each of the five functions of film music, **identify** a moment in a film that shows music being used in that way.
   Analyse how the music functions in those scenes to create meaning.
3 Select a short excerpt of a film that leads up to a climactic or important moment in the narrative.
   Explain the features of the music by describing the instrumentation, tempo and volume of the soundtrack

Analyse how the soundtrack creates meaning for audiences in this scene

Draw conclusions about how the music contributes to the climax or pinnacle moment of the scene.

4 Synthesise a short film sequence.

Experiment with different types of music to create specific genres. For example, film and edit a chase sequence, then experiment with different music selections to suggest the genre of action, romance, science fiction or comedy.

5 Choose a film that uses mainly popular music in the soundtrack, such as *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), *Juno* (2007) or *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017). Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

SYMBOLISE	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Symbolise the plot/character developments and associated songs using a diagram, identifying key plot/character developments and the popular songs used at each stage.	Analyse the lyrics of each song and compare the lyrics with what is happening visually at those moments in the film.	Appraise the significance of these song choices by assessing whether the lyrics: • provide an appropriate 'mood' for a scene (but may not be strictly related to the story developments) • match the action/storyline of a scene • further or enhance the narrative • provide a distanced or ironic commentary • contribute to how a character is represented.

NEW MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Computer-based media combine traditional media forms with new digital versions. Through a process called **convergence** (see page 56), traditional media forms 'converge' with digital formats, accessed via computer or mobile device. Convergence has seen the combination of existing media and the creation of engaging and innovative new forms. Computer-based language shares elements of traditional media, particularly film, television, magazines and newspapers.

Basic units of new media communication

Computer-based media language units are text, images, audio, video and animation. These elements are combined to create **multimedia** forms including the internet, disk-based multimedia, interactive television and video games.

Hypertext

Internet sites and multimedia products typically involve a series of menus and document pages linked together in a web-like structure that allows nonlinear access to information. Users select their own path to specific information by following a trail of related information – 'drilling down', click by click, to reach their objective. Any page, picture, paragraph or word can be linked to any other. Information can be accessed in whatever order the user chooses. This navigation system is called **hypertext**. Each link – whether word, icon, graphic, picture or video – is known as a hypertext link or **hyperlink**.

Conventions of hypertext

Convention dictates that when a mouse pointer is positioned above a hypertext link, it should change form from an arrow to a hand. In this 'hover state', the link should also change appearance. When the link is clicked, it should temporarily change appearance again ('active state'), and the link content is loaded. A 'visited' hyperlink is also often represented by a different colour ('visited state').

Hypertext is a very efficient way to store information. It not only provides a link to specific content, but also gives contextual links to related materials.

User interfaces

A user interface is used to help navigate through computer-based media. The interface ranges from simple buttons and menus on the screen to more complex interface tools such as 3D goggles, motion sensors and even body suits with sensors allowing the user to 'feel'. The interface also includes the product's artificial intelligence, especially obvious

in video games. User interfaces can be classified into three categories: symbolic, iconic and indexical interfaces.

1 Symbolic interfaces

This form of interface is commonly known as programming. A user must know the computer language used and the conventions of its use. Programming languages use textual 'code' in the same way that the English language uses words – to represent objects or actions. This interface features few barriers to hinder the user's creativity, but is almost impossible to use without a thorough knowledge of the code.

2 Iconic interfaces

This interface style features icons that stand for actions, and menus that allow the user to select among predetermined options. This interface is extremely productive and easy to use, but limits the user to a range of pre-programmed actions. The most common examples are the Windows and Mac OS interfaces with their metaphoric 'desktop' functionality. By using a metaphor that simulates a real-life environment, users of the product quickly become familiar with its functions.

3 Indexical interfaces

This style of interface is richly decorated with images and colour. It is immersive, becoming part of the production and not simply a way to use it, which enhances the overall effect and allows the user to become more involved with the product. This kind of interface is commonly found in multimedia and video game products. It provides a variety of navigation options, from simple iconic buttons to random artistic patterns or images that transform when clicked. Indexical interfaces allow a designer to artistically explore the possibilities of interface design.

Multimedia

Multimedia is a key aspect of all new media forms, including the internet, interactive television and video games. Multimedia is an environment in which more than one media type is used.

Multimedia elements

There are five main media elements used in new media: text, graphics, animation, audio and video. The combination of these media elements in an interactive form is known as multimedia.

- **Animation** can provide a multimedia work with a slick, well-produced look and feel, adding impact and creating visually exciting interfaces. Animation is also useful for demonstrations and presenting data. It is often used for artistic effect or for storytelling.
- **Video** is a familiar and proven means of effective communication. Video in websites, online advertising and games is common. It is compressed into smaller file sizes by 'stripping out' inessential data, such as unused colour information, unchanged image areas from frame to frame and out-of-frame footage. However, relying too heavily on video can mean that users with slow internet connections do not wait for it to download.
- **Audio** can be integrated into a multimedia product in a variety of ways. One way is through narration. Speech can offer commentary without obscuring the information on the screen. Audio can also be used for providing a sense of place or creating a mood.
- **Text**. Computer-based media content is viewed on a computer screen. Screens have limited resolution, which makes it difficult to read small text. Until screen technology improves to rival the readability of paper, large amounts of small text should be avoided. Designers overcome readability problems by breaking the text into manageable pieces linked via hypertext.

  Text for computer-based media is written in an inverted pyramid style, following the tradition of print journalism, with the most important information at the top. Where text is placed over a background, simple background colours and images should be used to ensure the text is legible.
- **Images**. Multimedia is highly visual. Like video, pictures are compressed to save space. Graphics may be content, but are also used in the user interface and to establish 'look and feel'.

Structuring information in multimedia

The power of multimedia and hypertext lies in the way information can be linked together. However, users view any site only one page at a time. This is in contrast to newspaper readers who can view the work as a whole. Because of this, a multimedia user needs to create a mental model of the content structure, or the ways in which the information is linked and related.

Users need predictability and structure, with clear functional and graphical continuity between the various components and subsections of the multimedia product. Menus and document pages share a consistent identity through using the same graphics, icons and visual style. This avoids 'orphan' pages. The organisation of information into an ordered and easily understood layout is called information architecture.
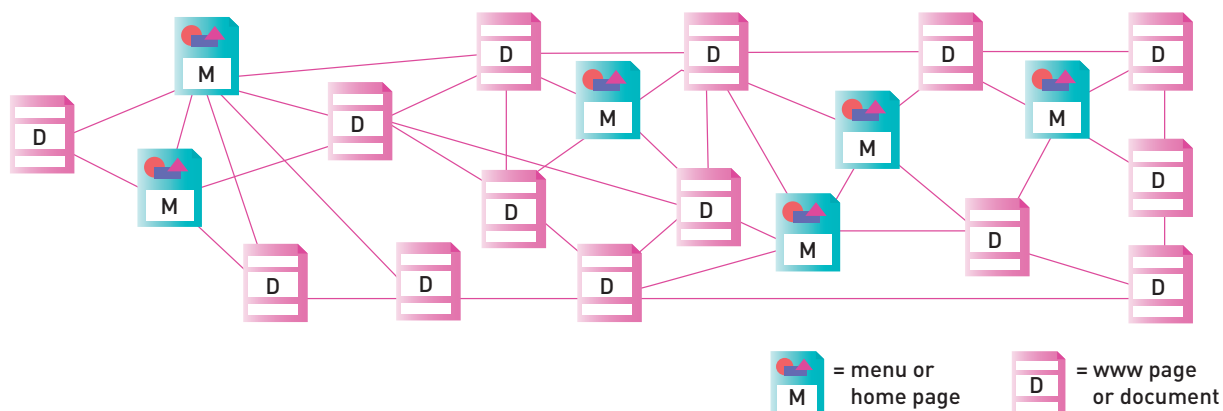
= menu or home page

= www page or document

Figure 2.47 Poor multimedia design. This model of information organisation is jumbled and difficult to follow. Users of this multimedia product or website would find it very hard to navigate.
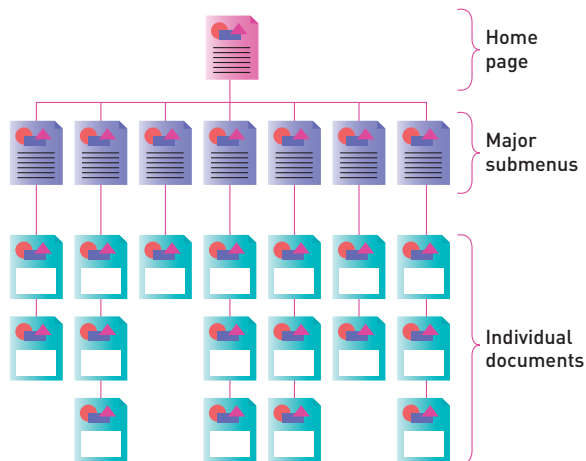
Home page

Major submenus

Individual documents

Figure 2.48 Good multimedia or internet page layout and organisation. The user has easy access to information, which is arranged in a clear, logical and predictable way.

2.8 ACTIVITIES

1   Explain how hypertext is a useful means of making information easier to find.
    Explain how hypertext works and illustrate its processes by providing a sample, with the links exemplified or worked through. Demonstrate your understanding of the form by identifying its advantages and also any disadvantages.

2   In small groups, visit the library to choose and research a topic of your choice, such as a historical event. Half the group should search for information on the topic and related data in print sources, while the rest should use the internet or online encyclopedias.
    Analyse your results. Consider which method found the best information, which was the easiest to use, and which provided the most relevant related information. Make a judgement about the effectiveness of each approach, considering strengths and weaknesses. Use overall efficiency and accuracy of information as the criteria.

3   Structure a diagram showing the plan of an actual or imaginary website, exemplifying how each of the pages are linked via menus and sub-menus.