

Analyzing Editing in Film and TV

camera shot: single, continuous view taken by a camera, from the time the camera starts recording to the time it stops

cut: transition from one shot to another

cutaway shot: brief shot that links two pieces of film or video; is often used to cut away from the main character and show what the character sees or does

dissolve: transitional device in which one image is gradually replaced by a new image; often signals the beginning of a new sequence or scene

editing: process of selecting and arranging shots in a sequence; director and editor piece together shots to create the scene they envisioned in their storyboards

fade-in: transitional device in which a white or dark screen gradually brightens to full exposure, revealing the beginning of a new sequence or scene

fade-out: transitional device in which the shot on the screen gradually darkens until it is completely black, signaling the end of a sequence or scene

pace: amount of time each shot stays on the screen and the rhythm that is created by the transitions between shots; quick cuts create a fast pace

sequence: one scene or series of scenes that focuses on a single event, setting, or storyline within the narrative

storyboard: sequence of sketches and explanatory notes outlining each shot of a film or TV show; often used to plan the shooting of a film or TV show and to help the director envision what the finished production will look like

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Films and TV shows are comprised of thousands of shots that are edited together to tell a story. Filmmakers arrange shots in a certain order to tell the story as they envisioned it, to create certain effects, and to evoke emotional reactions in viewers. Recognizing how shots are arranged can help you understand your reactions to events and characters, as well as to the overall story.

HERE'S HOW

Strategy 1: Recognize that editing affects viewers' understanding of time and place. Films are edited to manipulate time and place to advance the narrative and create drama.

- Consider the span of time over which a film or TV show takes place. How does editing help convey the passage of time or a change in setting?
- Notice the editing techniques, such as **fade-ins**, **dissolves**, and **fade-outs**, which signal the beginning or end of a scene.
- Understand that time is manipulated. Compressing time—or omitting the mundane activities of real life—allows editors to create the drama and suspense that heighten viewers' interest.

Strategy 2: Notice the selection of camera shots. The final shots filmmakers choose are based on their vision of the narrative and the messages and connections they intend to convey. For example, if a character is stood up by his girlfriend, a filmmaker might show close-ups of the character's face. The effect might emphasize the character's emotions, prompting viewers to sympathize with him.

- Pay attention to **cutaway shots**, which can reveal important details about a character's motivations or emotions.
- Be aware that a story can be shot and edited in countless ways. Consider how the choice of shots affects your impression of the characters and perception of events.

Strategy 3: Consider the pace. The pace of a film is mostly determined by the length of time shots stay on the screen. An action scene is often made up of short, quick cuts to increase the tension and establish a suspenseful mood. Long cuts, however, can create a peaceful mood and allow viewers time for thoughtful contemplation.

- Think about how the **pace** affects the mood of the scene and your reaction to the characters and events.
- Try to notice the approximate duration of time each shot remains on the screen. Is the action strung together by a series of quick or long cuts?

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Directions: A film editor has to choose the shots that will best convey a scene. Ultimately, the selected shots influence the audience's understanding of the scene. Below are two series of shots for you to consider. In the first series (Story 1), the arrangement of shots tells the story of a lone rider who is being pursued by a large group. In the second series (Story 2), the lone rider is absent. What images could you insert in the blank boxes to change the meaning of the story? Draw a rough sketch of the two shots you would add.

Story 1

Frame 1



Frame 2



Frame 3



Frame 4



Story 2

Frame 1



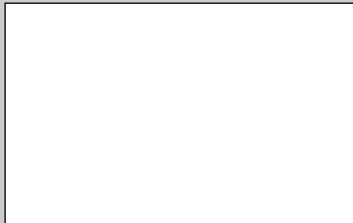
Frame 2



Frame 3



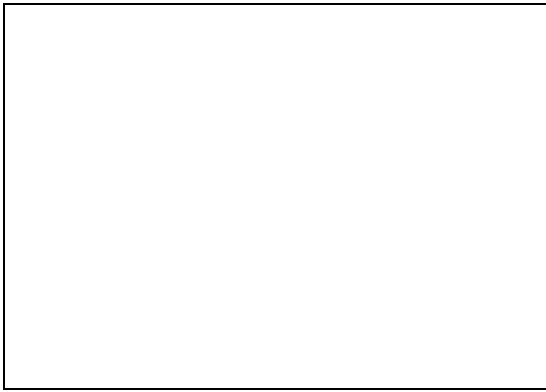
Frame 4



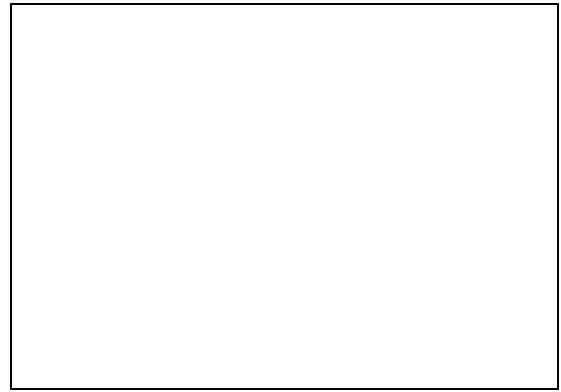
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Directions: Select a short scene from a film or TV show. Record the scene on a VCR or DVD player. View the scene multiple times, using the pause function as necessary, so you can identify all the different shots that make up the scene. Next, using the panels below, create a storyboard of the scene. For each box, draw one shot from the scene. On the lines below the box, describe the shot and its effect. You will need to draw additional boxes for the remaining shots in the scene or make additional copies of this worksheet.

1.



3.



2.



4.