

# CHARACTERISTICS OF FILM



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# GLOSSARY

Overview from Study Design	3
Media Code & Conventions & Audience	3
Motif	4
Foreshadow	5
Semiotics	6
Visual Storytelling	6
Montage & Editing	7
Breaking the Forth Wall	7
Symmetry	8
Easter Eggs in film	8
Visual Composition & Camera	9
Casting	9
Colour	10
Costume	10
Setting & Location	11
Sound	11

## Overview from the Study Design:

When we study Media we must understand the language that is built around this vast subject area. Given that there are many Media Forms and these forms are constantly evolving, we need to be aware that this subject is never stagnant.

To understand the [Characteristics of film](#) it is good to know about the Media Code & Conventions according to the MEDIA STUDY DESIGN 2004 - 2028

### Media codes

Technical and symbolic tools are used to construct meaning in media forms and products. Media codes may include the use of camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics and paper stock for print.

### Media conventions

Media conventions are rules or generally accepted ways of constructing meaning or organising media products. Conventions may refer to:

- conventions of media forms and products: the rules and common practices for constructing and organising media forms and products
- genre conventions: the rules that define genres are subject to debate and change, revealing cultural assumptions about the significance of media products; the type of audiences who consume media products; and practices of the media industries
- narrative conventions: common narrative structures, such as character, character arcs and three-act structures.

## Audience:

All media products are distributed to audiences who consume them in different ways. Factors such as technology, critical media literacy and the context of creation and consumption can alter the way audiences receive, engage with and respond to media products.

- Audience reception: This refers to both the physical way audiences consume media products and the context of the time and place in which they receive it.
- Audience engagement: This refers to how audiences are affected emotionally and cognitively by a media product and how these ways of engaging combine to form complex meanings and experiences.
- Audience response: This refers to the way a media product may influence audiences to act or change their behaviour.

All media products are made for target audiences, defined by their cultural, social and historical contexts and demographics, as well as individual traits such as age, gender and values.

## Motifs:

Definition: A motif is a **repeated narrative element that supports the theme of a story**. A motif in film can be presented in a number of ways like physical items, sound design, lines of dialogue, music, colours, and symbols. Any motif used will vastly improve your story if it has narrative significance.

- Are repeated narrative elements that support the theme of a story.
- Can be presented through physical items, sound design, lines of dialogue, music, colours, and symbols.
- Reflect the film's theme.
- Help underscore central ideas.
- Enhance the narrative or underlying meaning of a film.



Source: Film The Sixth Sense. Example of MOTIF – the colour red used as a reoccurring motif to enhance the narrative and give audience clues.

## Foreshadow:

Foreshadowing means hinting about what is to come during later events. It creates expectations about how things might play out as your script continues. These could relate to tone or significant narrative events.

Foreshadowing offers viewers a certain amount of subtext so that they can guess what might be able to happen. For some viewers, this is part of the intrigue and appeal of watching your show or film as it enables them to develop theories about what might happen.

Foreshadowing also gives enjoyment to second or even third viewings of your show or film since viewers who now know how the plot pans out may wish to go back and look for clues they may have missed.

If two characters end up falling in love, we might see early scenes of this through camera angles, snatched glances, or through comments. We might even detect jealousy if one character makes a pass at another in their love interests' presence.

Foreshadowing also creates melancholy if it suggests one character is likely to die; it is closely linked to fate and signals the inevitability of death.

### **The two types of foreshadowing:**

Two types of foreshadowing, and they can both affect the plot in different ways.

#### **Direct Foreshadowing**

This is when the writer explicitly reveals to the audience what will happen rather than merely implying it. This could be information revealed to the audience via a narrator who is telling us the story from a future timeline or a small flashforward sequence.

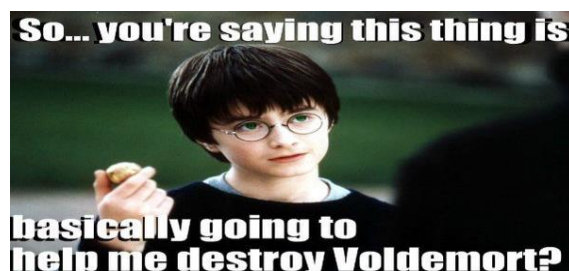
Flashforward and direct foreshadowing are closely related, but flashforwards are generally longer sequences intended to flesh out exposition, whereas direct foreshadowing is usually a small indication of an outcome.

#### **Indirect Foreshadowing**

Indirect foreshadowing is the most common type of foreshadowing when the writer merely hints at future outcomes or events in the course of the narrative.

The classic phrase "I've got a bad feeling about this," as your heroes do something particularly risky, is an example of indirect foreshadowing.

Or could also be in the use of a prop. A close up on a object that will be used to explain the plot or themes later in the narrative.

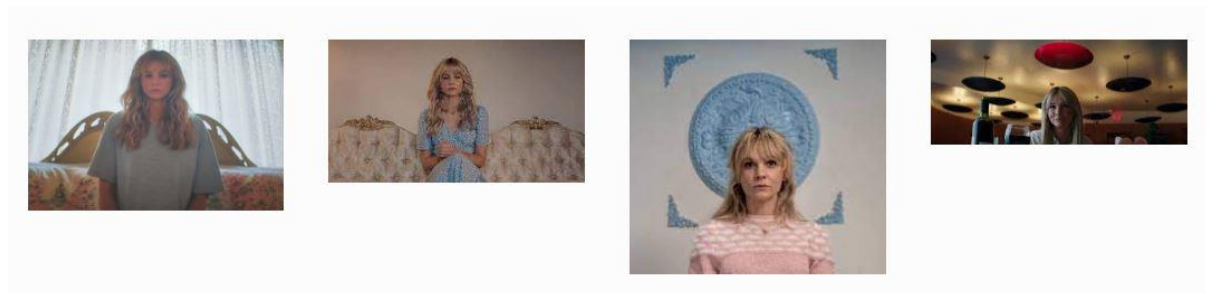


## Semiotics:

The study of these **signs, codes** and **conventions** in movies is called semiotics. Semiotic analysis is a way to explain how we make meaning from codes – all meaning is encoded in that which creates the meaning. No object or word goes without a meaning – we cannot read or see something without associating it to a certain idea – the meaning.

Semiotics is a fun way to subconsciously engage with your audience and create a deeper meaning to each scene. When used well semiotics can be used to convey the themes, propel the narrative, foreshadow events or give understanding to character.

Film communicates meaning denotatively and connotatively. What the audience sees and hears is denotative, it is what it is and they do not have to strive to recognize it. At the same time these sounds and images are connotative and the way the scene is shot is meant to evoke certain feelings from the viewer. Connotation typically involves emotional overtones, objective interpretation, social values, and ideological assumptions.



**FILM SOURCE: Promising Young Women – Using Semiotics. Angel reference to help audience understand the layers to the central character and her motives.**

## Visual Storytelling:

Visual storytelling is a **way of conveying complex thoughts and emotions without the use of much dialogue**. It is a **crucial aspect of filmmaking**, as it allows the audience to connect with the story on a deeper level. By using visuals to convey emotions, ideas, and narrative, filmmakers can create a more immersive experience for their viewers.

Rose keeps her white milk separate to her coloured cereal

Get Out, uses props as a component of Mise-En-Scene to reveal the ideology of race to its audience. Here is an example of this. Rose keeps her white milk separate to her coloured cereal. This is an intentional frame that Director Jordan Peele reveals to the audience. The close up of the coloured Fruitloops and glass of white milk allows the audience to see that Rose's character has the ability to keep these things separate. She



**SOURCE: Film Get Out – Visual Storytelling using Props & Camera as part of Mise-En-Scene.**

## Montage & Editing:

A montage is a film editing technique in which a series of short shots are sequenced to condense space, time, and information. Montages enable filmmakers to communicate a large amount of information to an audience over a shorter span of time by juxtaposing different shots, compressing time through editing, or intertwining multiple storylines of a narrative.

A montage can lighten the mood for the audience, allow characters to connect with each other and give a greater sense of purpose within the narrative.



**SOURCE: Film – Up – Montage Scene.**

## Breaking the Forth Wall:

Breaking the fourth wall is a narrative technique in film, television, and theatre that describes a character's awareness of their fictionality. It is when a character looks at the audience and talks to them. A fourth wall break occurs when a movie acknowledges the audience in any way, even without directly communicating with them. This technique allows writers and directors to directly connect with the audience in a more intimate way, allowing the audience to become something beyond just a mere observer.



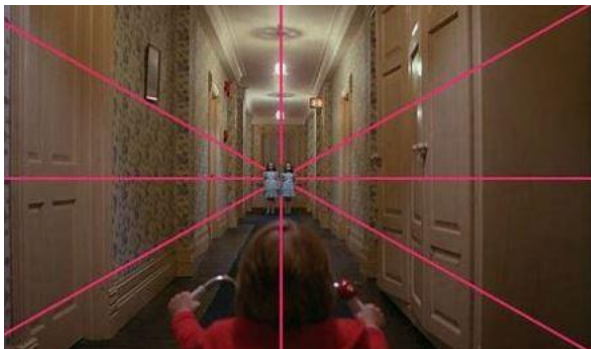
## Symmetry:

Symmetry in film refers to the balanced arrangement of elements within a frame, creating a sense of harmony and visual stability.

Symmetry in video refers to the balance and harmony of visual elements within a frame. It is often used to create a pleasing aesthetic, convey stability, or emphasize particular aspects of the scene. Here are a few key points about symmetry in videos:

- **Mirror Symmetry:** This occurs when one side of the frame is a mirror image of the other. It's commonly used in scenes to create a sense of balance and equilibrium.
- **Rotational Symmetry:** This type of symmetry can be seen when the scene rotates around a central point, maintaining a visually balanced composition throughout the movement.
- **Asymmetry:** Sometimes, filmmakers intentionally avoid symmetry to create tension, focus on asymmetrical elements, or direct the viewer's attention to specific parts of the scene.

Stanley Kubrick is widely thought of as a genius filmmaker and a master of film composition. Kubrick would use this type of composition to elicit a psychological reaction, to place the audience in an uncomfortable state, as this is the natural reaction to this type of framing.



**SOURCE: Director Stanley Kubrick**



**SOURCE: Director Wes Anderson**

## Easter Eggs in film:

Easter eggs in films are hidden details, references, or messages purposely placed by filmmakers. These hidden gems can nod to other works, include inside jokes, or hint at future projects, creating an engaging and interactive experience for eagle-eyed movie buffs and fans who discover them.

These hidden messages are often a playful way for the Director to talk directly to the audience without being explicit. Costume, Props, Sayings and Location references are commonly employed to give hidden meaning to the audience.

## Visual Composition & Camera:

Visual composition in film refers to the **arrangement of visual information within a camera frame**. It includes what elements are included in the image and how they relate to each other within it. There are three types of shots in film making: setup, angle-of-view (AOV) and point-of-view (POV). Directors deliberately compose the frame in a way that controls the narrative and induces viewers to pay attention to certain characters or points of interest in a scene.

Composition is the arrangement and organization of visual elements within the frame to create a balanced and aesthetically pleasing image. This includes characters, objects, shapes, lines, colours, and space. How these elements are positioned, framed, and balanced helps guide where we look, what we feel, and how we understand the story.

The arrangement of your objects and actors in a frame can add to your storytelling. You do this by emphasizing some objects and de-emphasizing others. Composition is an essential part of cinematography.



## Casting:

In film, to cast means to choose actors to play particular parts in a play, film, or show. It involves assigning roles for a play, movie, etc. to actors. For example, an actor can be cast in the leading role.

Sometimes, actors are cast against type, which means they play a different character than the one they usually play or might be expected to play. We see this when audience have prior knowledge of an Actor or Actress and have them type-cast. Meaning they know them for their previous likeability or style of acting.

## Colour:

**Colour in film** is strategically used to evoke specific emotional and psychological responses from the audience. Filmmakers employ colour choices to enhance storytelling, develop characters, and create immersive atmospheres. Different colors have specific meanings and associations.

Colour and psychology of colour in film and TV is the strategic use of colours to evoke specific emotional and psychological responses from the audience. Filmmakers employ colour choices to enhance storytelling, develop characters, and create immersive atmospheres. Each colour carries its own associations and connotations, influencing the viewer's perception and feelings.

We discuss colour in film via three mediums:

Saturation – The Intensity of the colour

Hue – The colour itself

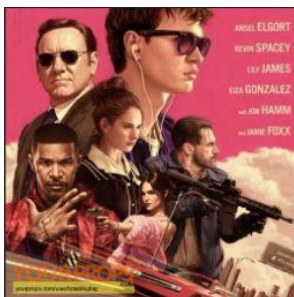
Value – The darkness or lightness of the colour



## Costume:

Costumes are an essential element of the overall design of a film. They are one of many tools the director has to tell the story, and communicate the details of a character's personality to the audience. Costume designers work within the director's vision for the film, and try to replicate clothing by investigating the dress and fashion of the time, or historical period, and essentially dress actors to look (or more fully become) their characters.

Costume Designers will use semiotics to represent characters through colour in outfits and factor in hair and makeup. This can be explicit or implied.



**SOURCE: Baby Driver (Implied) Promising Young Women (Explicit) and Kill Bill (Explicit)**

## Setting & Location:

Setting refers to the time and place in which a film or media narrative unfolds. It encompasses not only the physical environment but also the cultural and historical context that shapes the characters and events.

The movie setting helps establish a film's mood, atmosphere, and overall tone, influencing the story, characters, and our perception. The setting often helps advance a movie's narrative and plot. It can provide opportunities for conflict, tension, and resolution.

There are several different types of settings commonly found in movies: Urban, Rural, Historical, Fantasy & SiFi.

The setting can symbolically convey deeper meanings and metaphors. It can represent themes, ideas, or cultural contexts the filmmaker wants to explore.



## Sound:

Sound in a movie includes **music, dialogue, sound effects, ambient noise, and/or background noise and soundtracks**. Some sort of sound is always used to enhance the movie experience. Sound is broken into two categories; Diegetic (actors on set can hear and use the sound) and Non-Diegetic (audience can only hear). Often non-diegetic sound is added in post-production to increase the experience for the audience. Like a romantic song playing in the meet-cute moment.

While Sound is a Media Code it can also be considered a characteristics of any media product that contains sound production; like Podcasts, Social Media and Moving Image.

When discussing sound, we look at the following attributes:

- **Volume**
- **Pace**
- **Tempo**
- **Instruments**
- **Folley – Sound effects**

