

## **Film Studies** - intro tasks

In film studies we study films as if they are paintings- pieces of art that have been created by someone in a particular style to evoke a reaction and to communicate messages and viewpoints.

We do this by considering how filmmakers have used 'elements of film form' to communicate their ideas.

To get a better idea of this, think of a director that you like and make notes on the areas below. You might want to watch several films by the same director, or watch clips from a variety of films (these are often available online on channels such as 'Movieclips'- <https://www.youtube.com/user/movieclips> ).

If you would like some feedback or discussion about the work you have done, feel free to email your work or any questions to [msimpson@bayhouse.qfmat.org](mailto:msimpson@bayhouse.qfmat.org) . I hope you enjoy looking at films a little bit closer.

**Director chosen:**

**Films directed (and year released):**

- 1. How does the director use mise-en-scene?** This means 'the creation of the scene', and includes everything that we see on the screen. This includes props, settings, costume, make up (can be natural make up) and lighting. For example, in Trainspotting by Danny Boyle, green and red lighting appear throughout to symbolise the good and evil in the characters' lives.
- 2. How does the director use cinematography?** This includes camera shots, camera angles, camera movement, composition (how a shot is arranged) and lighting. [This video](#) will help to get an idea of some of the shots and angles directors use. For example, in Trainspotting Danny Boyle often uses very low close up shots. These allow us to see the physical impact drug use has had on the characters and to show them as being 'low down' in society.
- 3. How does the director use editing?** This area has some more complicated new concepts but consider the pace of editing. Each shot is on screen for a different amount of time before it cuts to another shot. Does the director allow a long time between cuts or are lots of cuts used in quick succession to speed up the pace? To see this in action, watch [the famous shower scene from Psycho](#) and think about how the editing speeds up to reflect the frantic attack, then slows down again afterwards with one long shot that zooms out from Marion's eye to reflect the 'calm after the storm'. You could also think about the time order of the editing- is the film in chronological order or does the director use narrative techniques such as flashbacks?
- 4. How does the director use sound?** If you've just watched the Psycho scene, you might have noticed the shrill violin 'stabbing' sounds used as Marion is attacked. This

use of film 'score' (music written specifically for the film) is so effective that we don't need to ever actually see the knife strike Marion. The sound is so well chosen it often makes spectators wince as they watch. How is music and sound effects used to create a particular tone or feel in your films? Pulp fiction uses many 'cool' tracks from a range of different time periods to give the film a cool feel whilst also making it hard to pinpoint when it is set. This means that it never feels 'old fashioned' despite being made in 1994. Saving Private Ryan uses an overwhelming amount of sound effects in the opening scene to make the viewer feel as panicked as the soldiers were during world war 2.

5. **Overall aesthetics.** Aesthetics means the 'feel' and 'tone' of film. Films like This is England are 'realist' films, so they feel gritty and down to earth to help with the realistic subject matter. In contrast, Star Wars often uses a polished, shiny aesthetic to give us the feeling of a futuristic fantasy world. Which does your director prefer? Do the elements of film form mentioned above contribute to this aesthetic?
  
6. **Representations.** When we watch films growing up, they play an important role in how we see the world. If we only ever see bad guys played by ethnic minorities, we may grow up thinking that this is the role of ethnic minorities in society. If we only ever see women playing roles in which they look after children and let men make decisions, we may grow up thinking that this is how society should be. This is called representation. For example, Benicio Del Toro's film Pan's Labyrinth tells the story of a young girl who is the main character and hero, standing up to older male oppressors. Here, young age and females are positively represented. **How are genders, ethnicities and age represented in the films of your director?**