

film vocabulary

ABSURDISM

Stage and literary term referring to ordinary settings becoming illogical, unrealistic, and incoherent.

ALLEGORY

A suggestive resemblance between a visible event or character in a film with other more significant or abstract levels of meaning outside of the film; an extended metaphor.

AMBIGUITY

A situation, story-line, scene, or character, etc. in which there is more than one meaning or interpretation.

ART CINEMA

Term coined to describe films made more for artistic reasons than commercial ones, often as a personal statement by the filmmaker.

AUDIENCE

Film spectators, viewers, or participants.

AUTEUR

French for 'author'. The term has a specific cultural and political history, beginning with the *politique des auteurs*, a manifesto drafted in the 1950s by a group of French film directors and critics which celebrated the role of the director as the 'author' of a film, particularly in what was then the 'Hollywood studio system'.

BRECHTIAN

To realise his theory of 'Verfremdungseffekt', or 'alienation effect', Brecht used a number of techniques, including songs and direct addresses to the audience, to prevent the audience from empathising with the characters or abandoning themselves to the narrative and thereby missing the political content of the drama. Brecht's methods were embraced by filmmakers as part of their efforts to shake up conventional narrative approaches, often, but not always, to political ends.

CUT

The splicing of 2 shots together. this cut is made by the film editor at the editing stage of a film.

CINEASTE

A film enthusiast (like you!)

CINEMA VERITÉ

French term that means "true cinema" or "cinema truth."

CHIAROSCURO

An effect created by blurring light and dark and making objects lose their clear outline.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Derived from the French word *cinématographe*, cinematography literally means "writing in movement" and is generally understood as the art and process of capturing visual images with a camera for cinema.

film vocabulary

COMPOSITION

The arrangement of all the elements of a shot in relation to the frame.

CONTINUITY

EDITING that matches action and objects from one sequence of images to the next so that the story is told continuously.

DIEGESIS

The denotative material of film narrative, it includes, according to Christian Metz, not only the narration itself, but also the fictional space and time dimension implied by the narrative. From the ancient Greek for “recounted story,” diegesis is a term used in film studies to refer to the story (or narrative) world of a film.

DIEGETIC SOUND

Sound that originates from a visible source within the story world. Non-diegetic sound, by contrast, is sound that originates from outside of the story world.

EDITING

The process of putting a film together—the selection and arrangement of shots and scenes.

ELLIPSIS

Periods of time that have been left out of the narrative. The ellipsis is marked by an editing transitions which, while it leaves out a section of the action, none the less signifies that something has been elided.

ESTABLISHING SHOT

A long **SHOT** at the start of a **SCENE** (or sequence) that shows things from a distance.

EXPOSITION

The telling of the film story, usually by providing information about the characters, settings and issues.

EXPRESSIONISM

A stylised form of cinema, in which the elements of shot and editing are mobilised primarily to evoke powerful feeling in an audience.

FILM THEORY

A philosophical or aesthetic model which seeks to explain the basic characteristics of film.

FRAMING

The border of the image which demarcates the space of the action. Framing can be loose or tight. It can also be open or closed.

GAZE

The exchange of looks that takes place in cinema but it was not until the 1970s that it was written about and theorised. In the early 1970s, first French and then British and American film theorists began applying psychoanalysis to film in an attempt to discuss the spectator/screen relationship as well as the textual relationships within the film.

GENRE

A type or category of film.

film vocabulary

ICONOGRAPHY

Single visual elements of a shot which resonate beyond their literal meaning or representation.

MONTAGE

Notion that a single shot has meaning only in relation to another shot. Thematic montage is a type of editing which, through the juxtaposition of contrasting shots or sequences, generates ideas in the viewer's mind which are more than the meaning of the shots themselves.

MISE-EN-SCENE

originated in the theater and is used in film to refer to everything that goes into the composition of a shot—framing, movement of the camera and characters, lighting, set design and the visual environment, and sound.

MODALITY

A term coined to unpack the notion of 'realism'. Modality refers to how close to reality the producer intends a particular work to be.

NARRATIVE

The way the film story is told. Each narrative is differentiated according to point of view, tone and style.

PARALLEL EDITING

A technique whereby cutting occurs between two or more related actions occurring at the same time in two separate locations or different points in time.

POINT OF VIEW

With POV, the audience is looking through the character's eye.

PERSPECTIVE

The point from which the action in the film is depicted or from which the story is told.

SCENE

A scene is composed of several shots.

SHOT

A shot consists of a single take.

SEQUENCE

A sequence is composed of one or more scenes.

SOUNDTRACK

All the audio elements of a film—dialogue, music, sound effects, etc. Reflexivity: Self-consciousness in a film that draws attention to its own construction (editing, camera movement, performance, etc.). Reflexive films often seek to remind the audience that it is watching a film.

STYLE

A particular way of using film technique to represent the world.

TRANSITION

A changeover in a narrative from one state of being to another. Transitions often take the form of reversals.