



A-level Film Studies



Bridging Course - Week 1



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St Mary's Catholic School

A-level Film Studies Bridging Course

Entry Requirements for Studying A-level Film Studies?

- Students who are expected to achieve at least a grade 5 in GCSE English Literature or English Language.
- Students who enjoy films and are keen viewers of films.
- Students who are interested in the technical decision making involved in filmmaking.
- Students who enjoy planning and writing essays.

What to expect from A-level Film Studies

A-level Film Studies aims to enable learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- a diverse range of film, including documentary, film from the silent era, experimental film and short film
- the significance of film and film practice in national, global and historical contexts
- film and its key contexts (including social, cultural, political, historical and technological contexts)
- how films generate meanings and response
- film as an aesthetic medium
- the different ways in which spectators respond to film
- It also aims to enable learners to apply critical approaches to film and apply knowledge and understanding of film through either filmmaking or screenwriting.

This bridging course will provide you with a mixture of information about A-level Film Studies, and what to expect from the course, as well as key work to complete. Students who are expecting to study Film Studies at A-level, and are likely to meet the entry requirements, must complete the bridging course fully and thoroughly, to the best of their ability. You should complete all work on paper and keep it in a file, in an ordered way. You will submit it to your teacher in September. All of

the work will be reviewed and selected work will be assessed, and you will be given feedback on it. This work will be signalled to you. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the school and appropriate resources will be sent to you. If you are thinking about studying Film Studies at A-level you should attempt this work to see whether or not you think studying a subject like this is right for you. If you later decide to study Film Studies, you must ensure you complete this work in full. This work should be completed after you have read and completed the Study Skills work that all of Year 12 should complete.

Course outline

Varieties of film and filmmaking

Six feature-length films will be studied for this component:

- Two Hollywood films from 1930 -1990
- Two American films from 2005 onwards
- Two British films from 1995 onwards

Global film

Five feature-length films will be studied for this component:

- Two global films
- One documentary
- One film from silent cinema

Film movements – Experimental film

One feature-length film from 1960 – 2000 will be studied for this component.

Assessment

Component 1 – Varieties of film and filmmaking -worth 35%	Component 2 – Global filmmaking perspectives – worth 35%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An exam lasting 2 hours 30 minutes. ▪ Learners must answer one question from each of the three sections. There will be a choice of two questions in each section. ▪ Section A: Hollywood 1930-1990 (comparative study) ▪ Section B: American film since 2005 (two-film study) ▪ Section C: British film since 1995 (two-film study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An exam lasting 2 hours 30 minutes ▪ Learners must answer one question from each of the four sections. There will be a choice of two questions in each section. ▪ Section A: Global film (two-film study) ▪ Section B: Documentary film ▪ Section C: Film movements – Silent cinema ▪ Section D: Film movements – Experimental film (1960-2000)
<p>NEA – a production and analysis worth 30%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is a non-exam assessment – you produce a short film or screenplay and an evaluative analysis of your production 	



The language of film is something that will be acquired over time and so some of the concepts we will look at may be challenging at first, but there will be lots of good examples to help you to make sense of them. Remember to take regular breaks, go back to any of the tasks after some time away, and try your best. Your Film Studies teacher will go over the following with you in lessons, early in Year 12.

1. You are now going to begin preparatory work relevant for Component 1 of the A-level, however, the film terminology and analytical skills you will practise will be useful for all 3 components of the course. Component 1 is an exam that focuses on varieties of film and filmmaking. Hopefully you will be someone who enjoys watching films and a range of films.



i. Before we begin, think about what your five favourite films are and why. Consider the genre of the film, what the filmmaker has done with their film in terms of some of their methods and what the film has made you feel and think.

We will review this list during the course to see if it changes!

Donnie Darko (2001)	<i>Genre:</i> science fiction psychological thriller. <i>Filmmaker's techniques:</i> The film creates an eerie sense of the protagonist's (main character's) mental state through harsh editing and varied shot selection. <i>Personal response:</i> the film blends a confusing sense of time and space with a dark humour that means the film stays with you.

2. We will start by looking at some of the key terms that you will explore when analysing films. This week we will be looking at **Cinematography**. Cinematography simply means the art of photography and camerawork in filmmaking.

i. One key element of cinematography is **shot types** – for each of the shot types below, explain when and why you think they might be used by filmmakers. Think about what they help to show or emphasise to the audience.

Shot type	Possible uses
 <p data-bbox="882 1384 997 1420">Close-up</p>	<p data-bbox="1270 1066 1402 1249">e.g. to show the reaction of a character</p>
<p data-bbox="244 1509 483 1541">Medium Close-Up</p> 	
<p data-bbox="244 1957 478 1989">Extreme Close-up</p>	



Medium Shot

Medium Long-Shot



Long-Shot



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ii. Another element of cinematography is the director's choice of **camera angle**. Match the camera angle term to the example given. Answers at the end of the document.

a)



b)



c)



d)



e)

f)



Angle Types

Canted

Eye-level

Low Angle

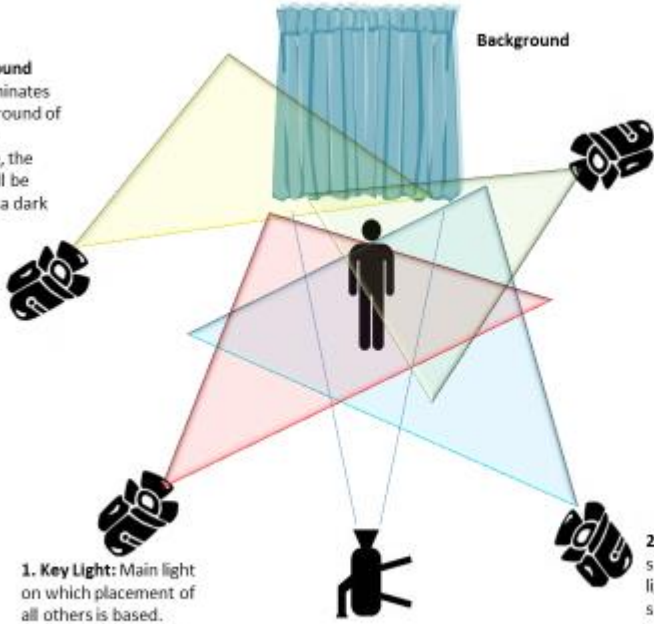
High Angle

Bird's eye view

Worm's eye-view

iii. **Lighting** is another element of cinematography that directors use to create meaning for the audience.

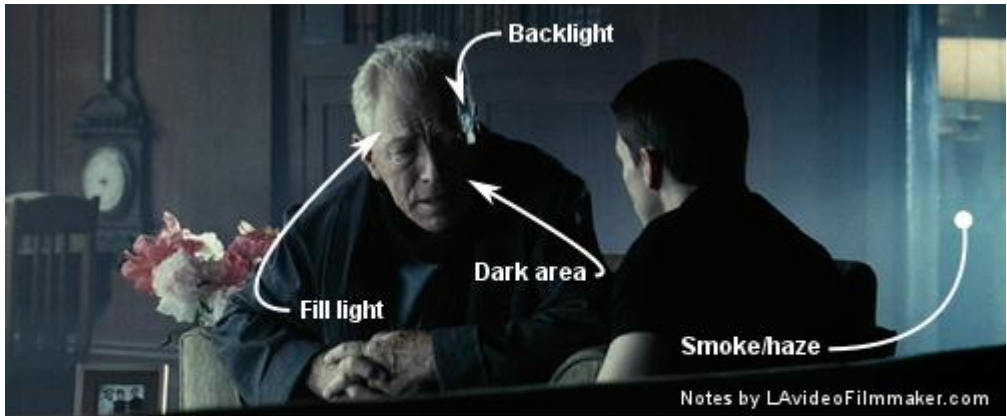
4. Background Light: illuminates the background of the scene. Otherwise, the subject will be well-lit on a dark set.



3. Back Light: Illuminates the back of the subject to create three-dimensions. Subject will "pop out" from background.

1. Key Light: Main light on which placement of all others is based. Usually the brightest.

2. Fill Light: Fills in shadows created by key light. Eliminates dark shadows on the subject.



An Outstanding Example of Film Lighting

Moody, high-contrast lighting with the use of smoke

Film still from "Minority Report" (Dir. S. Spielberg, 2002; DP J. Kaminski)

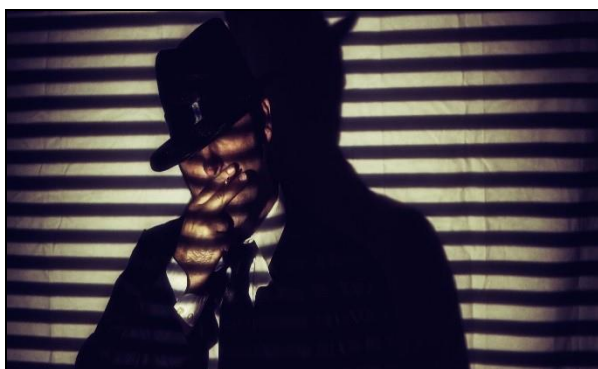
Image used pursuant to Fair Use doctrine

Watch this clip and **make detailed notes**:

How to Tell Story With Lighting | 7 Essential Rules

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjYhdNUIkI8

Make notes below on what meanings you think are communicated through the use of lighting in the following images. Think about what the lighting suggests about the characters and the mood of the scene:



Example: the character is only partly revealed by the lighting and the darkness, particularly across their face, makes him appear sinister and not to be trusted. It suggests that elements of the character will be revealed gradually.

Your ideas:



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3. **Watch** 'The Sense of an Ending' – available on the BBC iPlayer - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/categories/films/featured>

4. **Make detailed notes** on the following scene from the film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytf_UDqNFUs Think about what meaning is communicated to the audience through the following decisions that are made by the filmmaker. This table is just for you to record your ideas in note form rather than detailed analysis. What do you notice?

Shot type (close up, mid-shot etc.)	
Camera angles (high, low etc.)	
Lighting	
Setting	

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5. Having seen the film, here are some questions for you to think about. Try to use some of the terms we have looked at, but the important thing is to start to generate your own ideas about films you have seen in terms of their cinematography

i. How does the filmmaker communicate to the audience a change in mood or tone using lighting? Can you find any examples and describe your response to the use of lighting?

ii. Pick an example of a setting in the film. It could be a character's house. What does the setting, including props, decoration etc. reveal to the audience about the character involved?

iii. Pause the film on any shot of your choosing throughout the film. Pick one that you think is particularly interesting. Describe the scene below and try to pick out everything you notice about the cinematography and how you think the filmmaker is communicating meanings to the audience. You might want to comment on things other than cinematography that you notice e.g. sound.

<u>Angle Types</u>
Canted – c)
Eye-level – e)
Low Angle – b)
High Angle – a)
Bird's eye view – f)
Worm's eye-view – d)

Answers

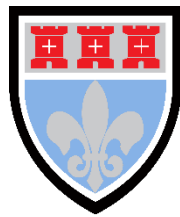
Glossary of terms for this course:

http://www.springhurst.org/cinemagic/glossary_terms.htm

A-level Film Studies



Bridging Course - Week 3



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[Recap](#)

Using the technical terms we looked at last week, **explain** how sound and editing are used by the filmmaker to produce maximum emotional impact in this dramatic scene from '71. The film tells the story of a British soldier who becomes separated from his unit during a riot in Belfast at the height of the Troubles in 1971.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TrHn6fILG8>

Week 3

1. This week we will continue with preparatory work relevant to Component 1 of the A-level. Remember that the film terminology and analytical skills you will practise during this bridging course will be useful for all 3 components of the course. Component 1 is an exam that focuses on varieties of film and filmmaking.

This week we will look at two further features of filmmaking, ***mise-en-scène*** and **performance**. We will explore how they are used to communicate meaning to an audience.

Mise-en-scène: the arrangement of everything that appears in the framing – actors, lighting, décor, props, costume. It is a French term that means “placing on stage.” The frame and camerawork are also considered part of the mise-en-scène of a movie

In terms of mise-en-scène, certain colours, shapes and imagery carry connotations. A connotation is a commonly understood cultural or emotional association that a word or phrase (or in this case colour on screen) carries in addition to its explicit or literal meaning, which is its denotation. We know, for example, that the colour red can connote danger. This is why red is used as a warning.

i. Why do you think humans react to the colour red?



Other colours also have their own connotations. Make some notes on the connotations that other colours carry.



ii. What comments can you make about the use of colour in this poster for the highly influential horror film, *The Exorcist*?



iii. **Semiotics** is the study of interpreting meaning from signs and symbols, namely colour, shape and image.

Symbolic coding is the way a text encodes meaning into itself by using recognisable signifiers.

Film students will need to conduct semiotic analysis or 'decoding'.



What does the mise-en-scène tell you about the narrative of this film?
(Focus your attention on characters, costumes and scenery.)

Draw a sketch of a 'typical' evil character, **labelling** with an explanation of your ideas.
Focus on the following things:



2. Next we will look at **Performance**.

The work done on screen by actors in films, using decisions they make themselves, or that are scripted or instructed by the director, can have a huge impact on an audience.

The Principal elements of performance covered in the Film Studies A-level are:

- the use of non-verbal communication including physical expression and vocal delivery
- the significance of the interaction between actors
- performance styles in cinema including method and improvisatory styles
- the significance of casting
- the role of directing as a 'choreography' of stage movement
- the relationship between performance and cinematography
- how performance conveys messages and values
- how performance is used to align the spectator and how that alignment relates to spectator interpretation of narrative
- how and why different spectators interpret the same performance differently

- how performance contributes to the ideologies conveyed by film
- how performance can be indicative of an auteur approach (director or performer)
- how performance and choreography contributes to a film's overall impact

A pair where one character has power over the other.

i.

We

are going to consider some of the basic elements of performance and how performers communicate ideas to an audience. This task may be a little embarrassing but it is worthwhile. With the help of another person in your home, **compose some acting freeze frames**. Consider the actors' positions, body language and facial expressions, to convey the following relationships...

The moment a character has received some shocking news.

A farewell scene when two people are parting, maybe never to see each other again.

The moment a character finds out that they have been betrayed by their best friend.

Describe your performance for each example. How did you communicate meaning as a performer?

Argyle's 10 codes of Non-Verbal Communication (NVC)

So much of what performers do onscreen to convey meanings and ideas is non-verbal and aside

from the dialogue they are delivering. Non-verbal communication is usually understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) messages between people.

Michael Argyle (1970) outlined the following codes of non-verbal communication that we can use to analyse film performers.

Para-language - Is vocal but non-verbal, such as voice pitch, tones, volume, speed of speech, um's and er's, hesitations, grunts and gasps. It can also include body language.

Eye contact - It is the meeting of the eyes with somebody else. If this eye contact is prolonged, the term 'mutual gaze' applies.

Facial expressions - Refers to the way the face can be used in emotions. The face is the communicative part of you.

Gesture - Is an action that communicates some meaning deliberately or unconsciously.

Posture - The way you unconsciously arrange your body when you stand, sit, lie down or walk.

Orientation - The way we position our bodies in relation to each other. It is an aspect of posture that shows how much attention we are paying to the other person.

Proxemics - Refers to the space between the communicator and the other people in various situations. The study of the way we use space to communicate. The relationship between two people.

Haptics - Communication by touch, is interpreted in different ways, depending on the circumstances, such as sympathy, guiding or punishment.

Appearance - The way we look/dress. Our appearance deliberately or unwittingly creates impressions on others.

Head nods - Sending off positive feedback, the speed of the nod can communicate different

signals.



ii. *Se7en*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZZtbwtb480>

As you watch this scene from David Fincher's *Se7en* and using some of the key terms mentioned above, make notes about:

The different ways in which the actors' bodies are orientated in relation to each other

The body postures adopted by both

The facial expressions used by the actors

Any changes in speech patterns they employ/the timing required for the delivery of lines

3.

ii. We are now going to look at the case of **Eric Stoltz**. In late 1984, Stoltz was cast to play the lead character of Marty McFly in *Back to the Future*. However, a month into filming, Stoltz was replaced by Michael J. Fox and most of the scenes already filmed were re-shot at great expense.

Listen to the interview below and make notes, using this case and other examples/your own ideas to explain why casting is so important to the success of a film.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=112&v=0JGNkfdFy-8&feature=emb_logo



iii. Watch this clip on 'How Stanislavski Reinvented the Craft of Acting' and answer the questions below.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iB1fPZX5Zgk>

- What is the “art of experiencing?”

- How did Stanislavski’s thoughts and ideas change the approach of actors, directors and writers?

iv. Watch Joaquin Phoenix portrayal of the Joker in this clip. Describe the performance using some of the terms and concepts we have looked at.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M2WTfCDtyU>



Here Joaquin Phoenix talks about playing the role in *Joker*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsAFv9HxHkc>

v. **Make notes** on the key elements of the performance that he talks about.

4. **Watch** *The King's Speech*, currently available on the BBC iPlayer.

Make notes on how Colin Firth's performance allows the audience to understand the experiences and emotions of the title character. You can also look for signs and symbols in the mise-en-scène and what they reveal about time, place and narrative.

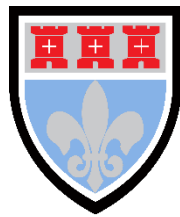
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A-level Film Studies



Bridging Course - Week 4



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Recap



Using the technical terms we looked at last week, **explain** your thoughts on Julianne Moore's dramatic performance in this scene from *Magnolia*. Consider all of the decisions that have gone into the performance, the meanings communicated and the effect created for the audience (you).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-A-L9LmQmU>

Week 4

1. We are going to continue with preparatory work relevant to Component 1 of the A-level. Remember that the film terminology and analytical skills you will practise during this bridging course will be useful for all 3 components of the course. Component 1 is an exam that focuses on varieties of film and filmmaking.

This week we will look at genre and how films can be categorised. We will also explore the history of cinema, looking particularly at technological advances. This will be followed by a focus on an example from the Silent Era.

Genre: A film genre is a category based on similarities either in the narrative elements or in the emotional response to the film (e.g. comedy, romance etc.) Most theories of film genre borrow from literary-genre concepts. Our expectations of genre can be played with for effect by the filmmaker.

Generic-hybrid: a hybrid genre refers to a combination of two or more stylistic, themed categories in one film. Examples include Romance Comedy (Rom-Com) e.g. *Crazy Stupid Love*, *Notting Hill* and Science-fiction Western e.g. *Cowboys vs Aliens* and *Back to the Future III*

i. Complete the table.

Genre and film examples (add your own)	Narrative/Setting similar plots and structures, situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions, locations	Characters stereotypical characters, roles, personal qualities, motivations, goals, behaviour	Iconography and Props familiar stock of images, décor, costume, objects, patterns of music and sound	Themes topics, subject matter (social, cultural, psychological, professional, political, sexual, moral), values
Western e.g. <i>Pale Rider</i> , <i>The Searchers</i>	A stranger enters a town on the frontier. Ends with a shootout.	The Sheriff. The Outlaw seeking revenge.	Guns, gunfire, horses, saloon piano music and bottles.	The rule of law, the glorification of the Wild West.
Rom-com <i>Bridget Jones' Diary</i>				

Horror <i>Midsommar</i>				
Thriller <i>Seven</i>				
Sci-fi <i>Avatar</i>				
Crime <i>The Godfather</i>				
Documentary <i>Fahrenheit</i> <i>9/11</i>				
Action <i>Die Hard</i>				
Adventure <i>Pirates of the</i> <i>Caribbean</i>				
War Saving Private Ryan				

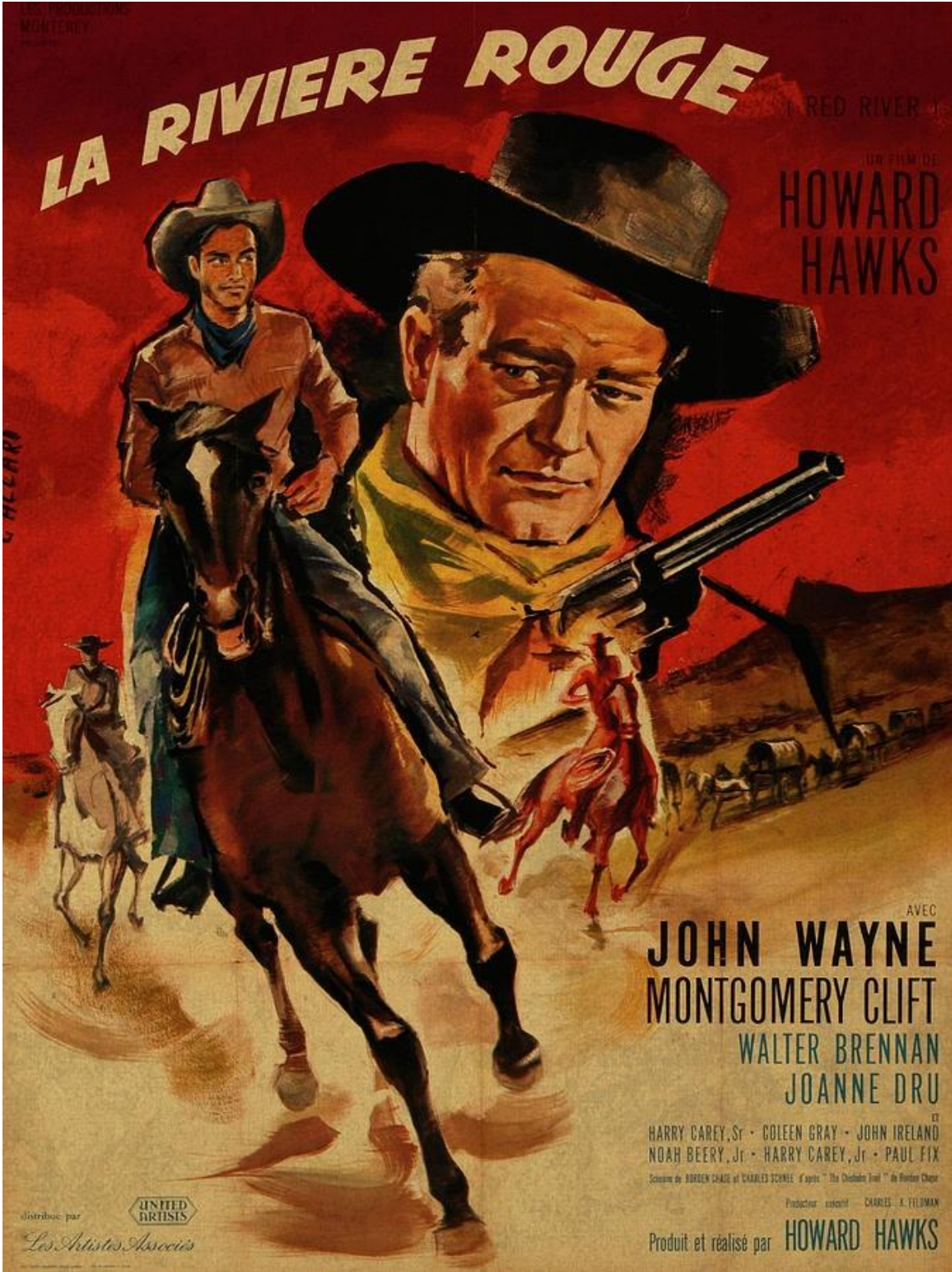
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ii. **Watch** this 'spoof' trailer for the classic family movie, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. What has been done to the trailer to change the genre and what is the new genre being presented?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9Cby33ZR98&t=88s>

iii. For each of these film posters, note what you think the genre is and list the elements included in the poster that give you that impression.





LA RIVIERE ROUGE

RED RIVER

UN FILM DE
HOWARD HAWKS

AVEC
JOHN WAYNE
MONTGOMERY CLIFT
WALTER BRENNAN
JOANNE DRU

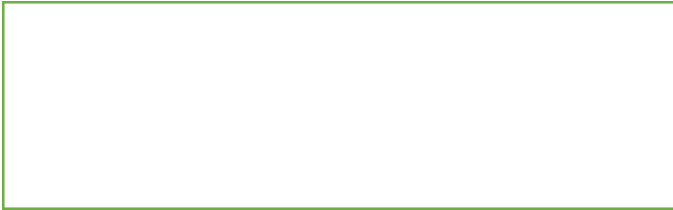
ET
HARRY CAREY, Sr. · COLEEN GRAY · JOHN IRELAND
NOAH BEERY, Jr. · HARRY CAREY, Jr. · PAUL FIX

Scénario de BORDEN CHASE et CHARLES SCHMIDT d'après "The Outlaw Trail" de Weston Clapp

Producteur associé · CHARLES J. FELDMAN

Produit et réalisé par **HOWARD HAWKS**

distribué par
UNITED ARTISTS
Les Artistes Associés





iv. **List** your favourite film stars or stars that are familiar to you. Record the genre they are most commonly associated with, including film examples. Are there any roles where they have stepped out of this genre e.g. Bruce Willis is an action star but has also appeared in supernatural thriller *The Sixth Sense*?

Actor	Associated genre (with examples)	Roles outside of the genre (with examples)
Bruce Willis	Action e.g. <i>Die Hard</i> , <i>Looper</i>	Supernatural thriller e.g. <i>The Sixth Sense</i>

v. Are 'bigger' stars more able to move out of their associated genre? Aim to provide examples in your answer.



Robin Williams

Watch these two clips of performances by Robin Williams. One is a 'typical' role for the much-loved actor and the other, something quite different.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_lbK_6n5eY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jipg0KQ4id0>

vi. Why was Robin Williams an interesting choice for his role in *One Hour Photo*, given his association with the comedy genre? What impact might this have had on audiences?

2. History of Film

Since the birth of cinema, the films that are produced have been transformed by a range of technical, sociological and cultural developments.

Using this web article and any of your own ideas/research, **produce a timeline** of some of the key developments in filmmaking and cinema technology. Explain the concepts

that have developed and give examples of films that showcase these developments and changes over time.

<https://www.wired.com/2010/10/cinema-breakthroughs-busts/>

Example (larger version at the end of the document)



The History of Cinema



> The 1990's

There were 10,000 cinemas in the United States. An enormous amount of **silent films** was produced. Most were very short, lasting only a few minutes. In addition to a musical accomplishment, piano playing for example, live actors sometimes **improvised the dialogues**.



> In the 60's

With the increasing popularity of **television**, Hollywood's Golden Age came to an end. Films began to reflect the social changes of the times: **some films criticized American attitudes** towards Native American (*Little Big Man*, 1970).



> 1895



The French **Lumière Brothers** improved on Edison's kinescope and invented the **cinématographe**, which was both a camera and a projector.

> 1897



The **first cinema** opened in Paris. Films were simply scenes of moving images – trains, parades, waterfalls... **Georges Méliès**, a French magician, introduced the idea of **storytelling** in films and was the first to use **special effects**.

> The 20's

Producers left for California. Where constant sunlight and **varied landscape** (mountains, sea, and desert) made it possible to shoot all types of films. **Hollywood became the film-making capital**.



> 1927
Introduction of the **sound** in the *Jazz Singer*, the first "talkie".



> 1935 : Introduction of colour

> Since the early 80's

Computers have made it possible to **manipulate images** and create characters and things that seem real. The technique of **morphing**, in which objects change from before the viewers' eyes, was the first used in *Terminator II* (1990).



3.

i. **Watch** *Nosferatu* (1922) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCT1YUtNOA8>. This silent German Expressionist horror film is regarded as an influential cinematic masterpiece.

Although *Nosferatu* is a silent film, it was released with a separate film score that, depending on the cinema, would have been played by a live organist while the film played for the audience.

ii. After you have watched the film, select another horror film of your choice, made since **2005**, with which to compare it. I can recommend *Get Out*, *Us*, *A Quiet Place*, *IT* and *Train to Busan*, but it is entirely up to you which one you choose. However, before you begin the extended response, you will need to make notes on both films.



(1922) *Us* (2019)

Nosferatu

You will develop the notes made below into a short essay in which you will express your ideas on the differing uses of micro-features (editing, performance, cinematography etc.) in the two horror films.

This task will be given detailed feedback when we return to school.

	<u><i>Nosferatu</i></u>	<u>Post-2005 Horror choice</u>
<u>Camera angles</u>		
<u>Shot types</u>		
<u>Lighting</u>		

<u>Mise-en-scene</u>		
<u>Sound (or the absence of sound!)</u>		
<u>Performance</u>		

Extended response

How do the two filmmakers use micro-features (the areas covered in the table above) to communicate meaning and to elicit the desired response from the audience?

This is very different from anything you will have written before, so just have a go!

Include:

- your ideas on the techniques used by the two filmmakers
 - specific examples from both films
 - the specialist film terms we have been exploring over the last 4 weeks
 - the differences and similarities you notice
 - your personal response to the films in specific scenes and as a whole
-
- To help you with this task, please read the following article and make notes on the significance of *Nosferatu* and its iconic place within cinema and horror history.

<http://screenprism.com/insights/article/how-is-nosferatu-different-from-later-vampire-films>


Notes

Essay

Optional extension task:

If you have the time and the equipment (a mobile phone and a free to download editing software) why not **make a horror film trailer** of your own. This could last between 30 seconds (teaser trailer) and 2 minutes 30 secs, using the conventions of the genre that we have looked at.

Alternatively you could **storyboard a trailer** in the following way:

Image				
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Description Setting:				
Cinematography:				
Lighting				
Sound				
Mise-en-scene				
Performance				

Here is an example of a horror film trailer to get you thinking.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNCmb-4oXJA>

Glossary of terms for this course:

http://www.springhurst.org/cinemagic/glossary_terms.htm

You can zoom in on this timeline to see the text more clearly at the following web address:

<https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/grammar/past-simple-tense/timeline-history-cinema/91877>

