

Teacher resource sheet

The storyboard

A storyboard is a graphic plan of specific shots that will be collected into scenes. It can just be pencil sketches and hand-written labels, which is how yours will look. They were once drawn by hand. Early cartoon storyboards from Disney studios sell for substantial sums of money today as collectors' items. The purpose of a storyboard is to help the director of cinematography to plan out the sequence of shots to maximise clarity and emotive effect in the film.

When producing a storyboard, decisions have to be made about the following major techniques.

The type of camera shot

Camera shots can be categorised in seven varieties — extreme close-up, close-up, medium close-up, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot, extreme long shot (also called a distance shot). They have different uses and effects. Close-ups are used to reveal human emotions (on the subject's face) or draw our attention to a small but significant object. Medium shots are used to show action and conversation. An extreme long shot is often used as an 'establishing shot' at the opening of a film where the scene for the narrative is set.

Camera shots can be used to create **moods**. Think about how framing within a shot produces a particular meaning. For example, when we see a person being filmed from behind, the director may be suggesting that they're being watched by a sinister character, creating suspense or tension. A high angle shot of a person (with the camera positioned up high) may suggest vulnerability, as might a low angle shot of a cargo ship from the deck of a small yacht — producing two entirely different moods. *Think about the mood you wish to create when you set up your shots.*

The camera angle

Camera angles also come in many varieties from eye level angle to tilts, bird's eye view, high angle (where the camera is positioned higher than the subject) and low angle (where the reverse is true). In filming a subject from a high angle, we're effectively minimising its importance or power in the scene. The low angle, in contrast, maximises the subject's power as they tower over their surroundings, filling the frame. Other effects on meaning can be created through the use of oblique and reverse angles, impacting on all aspects of the viewing experience.

The movements between shots

Cameras move in relation to the subject they're filming. As well as moves of focus, such as zooming, cameras can move side to side from a fixed position (pan), track and dolly (move in tandem with the subject so it stays in the frame). These effects can be created by using wheel-mounted rigs or hand-held cameras, cranes and other gear specially designed to transport them. Special camera movements include the whip pan, in which the camera swings suddenly sideways, creating blurred streaks that emphasise the speed of movement. This mimics the view we'd get if we turned our head suddenly.

The mise en scene

This French term means 'everything put into the scene'. To comment on the mise en scene (pronounced miz-on-sonn), consider not only the technical and human aspects of film production, but importantly the interplay between them. Anything put in front of the camera to produce a particular impression or effect is part of the *mise en scene*. When considering mise en scene, consider these features:

- the positions and movement of cameras
- the use of filters, lenses and other visual effects hardware
- the set decoration, props and scenery
- the music
- the sound
- the lighting
- the wardrobe
- the actors
- the dialogue