

Useful Terms for Formal Analysis

Form = Narrative + Style

Narrative Terms:

Story: The entire narrative of the film, incorporating both those events which are actually represented on screen, and those which we infer as having occurred

Plot: The ordering and presentation of those events *as they occur in the film* (that is to say, as they are seen by us directly, or told to us, through dialogue, or through other means, such as printed titles)

Diegesis: The created story space of the film. A good test is to ask if the characters in the film would be aware of something that you're seeing on screen. If the answer is no, generally the element is non-diegetic.

Style Terms (can be broken down into four categories):

Mise-en-scene: Everything that is placed before the camera. Includes:

- Set
- Props
- Costume/Makeup
- Figure/Actor movement and expression
- Lighting (because it is set up before the camera starts rolling)

Cinematographic Properties: How the camera renders what is shot. Includes:

- Tone/Colour of film stock
- Speed of film – e.g. slow motion
- Perspective – e.g. how much is in focus
- Camera angles – e.g. low-angle, high-angle, canted-angle
- Distance – this is measured in distance from the subject – e.g. close up, long shot
- Mobile framing – camera movement – e.g. pan, tilt, track, crane

Editing: The relation of one shot to the next. Includes:

- Duration of the image – how long before a cut takes place
- Transitions – e.g. cut, fade, dissolve, iris
- How it can be used to create rhythm, graphic matches
- Crosscutting – creating a relationship between two different locales
- Continuity editing: creating the smooth flow of action from one shot to the next, in order to create narrative coherence. (a feature of Classical Hollywood Film)

Sound: includes voice, sound effects, music (both diegetic and non-diegetic)

- Loudness, pitch
- Capacity to create rhythm
- Fidelity – how faithful the sound is to its perceived source
- Onscreen vs. offscreen (do we see the source of the sound as we hear the sound)
- Simultaneous vs. non-simultaneous (does it occur in the same time frame as the image projected)
- Sound bridge: when the sound from one shot bleeds over to another shot.

Note: The definitions on this page have been adapted for the most part from *Film Art: An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. This 'summary sheet' is meant as a companion piece to the Kolker chapter in your readings, and will provide you with some vocabulary for assignments.