

Sequence Analysis / Shot List

OBJECTIVE The purpose of this assignment is for you to gain experience identifying and analyzing film technique. You will accomplish this in two parts: first, by filling out a shot list for a short sequence in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), using proper technical terminology; and, second, with the corrected shot list in hand, writing an analytical essay on that movie sequence, with particular attention to how *mise-en-scène*, *cinematography*, *editing*, and *sound* function together *meaningfully*.

SHOT LIST First, you will do the shot list, which will require studying each shot closely. When viewing the sequence, pause as needed to identify techniques in each shot.

To access the shot list sheet, you will download it (as a Word file) from the course website. (Please type out your answers in the file itself and then print it out to turn in to me.) Then, you will need to correctly indicate the following data:

1. DISTANCE (e.g., *MCU*, or “Jane in *CU* and Joe in *LS*,” or “first *LS*, then *MS*”)
ANGLE (*low*, *high*, or *straight on*)
2. HEIGHT (*low*, *average* [midsection to chest], or *high*)
LEVEL (*canted* or *level*)
3. MOBILE FRAMING (e.g., track, zoom; if instead static camera, list that)
4. DEPTH OF FIELD (only note if *deep focus* or *deep space*)
DURATION IN SECONDS (and if the shot is a *long take*, list that, too)
5. EDITING (mention the transitional edit used between shots: *cut* or *dissolve*, for instance; there may be other editing terms that apply, though: *eyeline match*, *graphic match*, *match-on-action*, one of the *dimensions*, etc.)
6. SOUND (note the *diegetic* and/or *non-diegetic sound(s)*, and note if silent)
7. DESCRIPTION OF THE MISE-EN-SCÈNE (you may write, “same as shot x” in the case of shots repeating in a shot-reverse shot sequence)
 - a. *Setting*, *costume & makeup*, and *acting/figure movement/body language/blocking* (descriptive notes will suffice)
 - b. *Lighting* (source: three-point or low-key, fill and key; direction(s); and quality)

ESSAY Once I hand back your shot list, corrected and with feedback, you may start writing your sequence analysis essay. In the essay you should make a simple argument (aka, *thesis*) about how any facet(s) of the *cinematography*, *editing*, *sound*, and/or *mise* are collaborating meaningfully in the sequence, and your analysis should support that argument. For example, you could argue that the cinematography and mise combine to advance a certain theme that you feel is meaningful to the film. Maybe you

feel the sequence introduces a stylistic pattern or that it marks a turning point in the film and its formal system. Maybe your thesis is that the cinematic elements are cooperating to advance the narrative itself. Maybe you see the visual style (apparent in the mise, cinematography, and editing) echoing the sound or the narrative. You could even assert that the sequence is typical of the film's visual and/or sonic style and discuss the relevance and purpose of that style. Whatever you argue, you should construct a simple thesis that enables you to closely analyze how that thesis is supported visually in the sequence.

WARNINGS Considering the brevity of this paper, be as concise and focused as possible. Do not make claims about the film that are not substantiated by your analysis. Do not attempt to touch on every facet of the four cinematic elements you are asked to detail in the shot list. Do not feel that you have to write equally about each shot or each of the four cinematic elements. You are not even obligated to analyze how all four are functioning in this sequence — you could focus on how just cinematography and editing make meaning, for instance. Remember, the *shot* list is where you get technical in every sense for every *shot* and every element, but the essay is an opportunity for you to analyze the *sequence* as you see fit, using the shot list as a kind of blueprint.

You are free to use the first-person in this paper, but do not begin every sentence with “I” (let your analyses speak for themselves). Do not think of this assignment as a film review — your objective is not to appraise the merits or flaws of the movie. Leave out all plot description, except as it may very briefly contextualize your technical analysis. As well, do not use outside sources.

Sequence: *Psycho* — end of shower sequence

Sequence starts 47 minutes, 40 seconds into the movie and ends at the 49:40 mark.

Thus, this 12-shot sequence last two minutes of screen time. I will make the sequence readily available for you by email in due time.

The 12-shot sequence begins with a shot of Marion's hand and ends with a shot looking out the motel room window at the Bates' house as Norman comes running out of it yelling, “Mother! Blood, blood!”

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- Length/Format:
- Essay, *not including shot list*, must be $700 \leq 900$ words (no fewer than 700 and no more than 900 words; list the official word count somewhere on your essay)
 - The essay must be: typed, 12-pt. font, double-spaced, and 1” margins

- Due dates:
1. SHOT LIST: **Tuesday, November 13**
 2. SEQUENCE ANALYSIS ESSAY: **At your section's “final exam”**