

## ANALYZING SCENES IN FILM AND LITERATURE

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### **Skills and strategies under development**

#### **Language Arts**

1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
2. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
3. Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
4. Uses the general skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
5. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

#### **Visual Arts**

1. Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts
2. Knows how to use structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art
3. Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts
4. Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
5. Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others

#### **Theatre**

1. Understands how informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning
2. Understands the context in which theatre, film, television, and electronic media are performed today as well as in the past

#### **Arts and Communication**

1. Understands the principles, processes, and products associated with arts and communication media
2. Knows and applies appropriate criteria to arts and communication products
3. Uses critical and creative thinking in various arts and communication settings
4. Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication

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### **Life Skills: Working With Others**

1. Contributes to the overall effort of a group
2. Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

### **Overview**

What are the elements of a scene? How does deconstructing scenes reveal meaning? In this lesson, students start to think like film directors by storyboarding an experience from their lives. They then examine the Times Movies feature «Anatomy of a Scene» and develop their own analyses of scenes from film and literature.

### **Materials**

Computers with Internet access and a projector; preselected video clips from NYTimes.com; handouts

## **Section 1: Introductory materials for homework**

### **Get acquainted with the basic film vocabulary:**

#### **1. «Incarnations of the Story»**

**Diegesis:** The narrative elements of a film that are shown or immediately inferred from the content of a film. Though implication is not the primary focus, diegesis is a methodological analysis for discerning the exact nature of the film including all of the action and dialogue. («Diegetic» – refers to things which exist within the «world» of the film’s narrative. Non-diegetic or extra-diegetic elements of a film do not «exist» or «take place» in the same plane of reality that the character’s inhabit. For example, presumably the characters within an action film do not «hear» the rousing theme music that accompanies their exploits. that music is extra-diegetic, but still part of the film).

**Narrative:** A term denoting a story in any form of human expression where no single individual is telling the story.

**Narrative Film:** Narrative films can include a large corpus of fiction and nonfiction films including documentaries and dramas though the genre is predominantly fictitious. Narrative films primarily concentrate on story lines and can include character development but the drama and usual fiction are emphasized.

**Plot:** The events in an individual narrative and how they are arranged. Arguably the plot and the story are not the same. Narrative includes everything that is supposed to have happened in the «story»; plot is more

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concretely the scenes that are presented in the film, in the precise order in which they are presented.

**Story:** The specific unfolding of a sequence of events in a film. It includes character involvement, settings, and an order that superimposed in an arbitrary manner by the screen writer or by a parallel historical sequence through which the themes are

developed. The story is general whereas the plot is specific and includes both internal and external relations to the work.

### 2. «Basic Elements of a Film»

**Frame:** Frames in essence are still images that are collected in quick succession, developed, and projected giving the illusion of motion. Each individual, or still, image on motion picture film is referred to as a frame.

**Shot:** In the process of photographing a scene a shot refers to one constant take by the camera. It is most often filmed at one time with a solo camera.

**Sequence:** Segments of a film narrative that are edited together and unified by a common setting, time, event or story-line.

**Sound Track:** That portion of the sound film medium to which are recorded the dialogue, music, narration and sound effects. The sound head and film gate on a film projector are physically separated from one another. This gap is covered during the recording of a sound-film by keeping the soundtrack recording a few frames head of the photographic image. The sound passes over the projector head at the same time the photographic image passes before the projector's light aperture/lens (the film gate).

### 3. «Basic Manipulations, and Assemblings of the Basic Elements»

**Cutting (a.k.a. Editing):** The process of changing from one shot to another accomplished through the camera or by the splicing of shots together by the cutter (editor). This is also referred to as editing, the preferred term, and includes the decisions, controls, sensibilities, vision and integrative capabilities of the individual editing (cutting) artist.

**Invisible Cutting:** Editing procedures that are so well-formed that the viewer is not aware that a splice has taken place. This is particularly important in action sequences because the audience is psychologically intent on the moving images that a cut in the film – an unobstrusive cut – is not noticed. This can easily be contrasted with Eisenstein's technique of quick cuts and jump cuts from one scene to the next without transition so as to unnerve the audience and evoke emotional responses in them.

**Montage:** In the production and editing of film this term has come to refer to a seemingly unrelated series of frames combined so that one scene quickly dissolves into the next, shifting categories, effects and settings in such a manner as to convey a quick passage of time or an abstract unity through thematic devices such as meter, rhythm, tonality, and intellectuality (viz Eisenstein). Continuity, if it exists, is not captured in a frame by frame juxtaposition but rather through an abstraction. (Also see «mise-en-scène».)

**Synchronization:** Correctly aligning the photographic and audio portions of a film so that the image and sound is heard and seen simultaneously.

**Framing:** Properly surrounding the subject of a shot by the edges of the actual boundaries of the film. All that is seen in the viewfinder of a camera does not always translate directly into the proper centering of the subject. Framing is a technical nuance learned in the process of photography.

Involves camera angle, distance, and arrangement of objects and people in front of the camera (the «mise-en-scène»). Important in framing is the way that the edges of the screen make a sharp distinction between what is seen and what is not seen, what is included and what is excluded, in a particular frame.

#### 4. «Basic Elements of the Camera Setup»

**Camera Angle:** This term refers to the point of view held by the focal point of the camera when it is positioned for shooting. Included in the angle is the perspective given by the camera to the depth of focus, height and width of the particular object and action being photographed. The angle also refers to whether the shot is taken from behind, in front, from the side or from the top or bottom of the particular view. Terms appropriated for these various angles include eye-level angle, high-angle, low-angle, sideview angle and the «Dutch» angle.

**Distance:** Distance refers to the amount of relational space between the audience and the character on the screen. Though the characters are two-dimensional and the audience is distinctly separate from the screen by dead space (virtual reality in the theatre has not yet been developed) the camera's perspective, in effect, attempts to provide the amount of space desired subject to the director's discretion. This space often results in the interaction and psychological connection between the characters and the audience. The connection is achieved through the dynamics and varying degrees between long shots, medium shots and close-ups.

**Establishing Shot (a.k.a. «Master Shot»):** At the beginning of a film, episode or scene within a film, a wide-angle or «full-shot» is photographed for the purpose of identifying the location or setting. Thus the audience has established, or been given the opportunity to surmise an orientation. It also

helps to establish the distinctions between the general locale and the specific details – from subsequent shots – within the general context.

**Perspective:** Spatial relationships. In film (painting, photography, theatrical performances, et cetera) perspective refers to the accurate depiction of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. (In experimental forms of film, of course, the accurate depiction is redefined). Height and breadth come naturally to the surface but the added dimension of depth must be constructed through cameras, lenses, sets, and designs during composition. (See «anamorphic lens» and «composition»).

### 5. «Basic Camera Movements»

**Camera Movement:** Conventional uses of the camera to obtain camera angles and various perspectives while filming include panning, tilting, tracking or zooming of the camera. These camera ploys are also known as camera movement and rarely does the camera remain static. When a movement does occur, however, the camera comes to a rest providing a smooth transition to the scene. Movements are coordinated with the action in a scene so that the camera does not go in the opposite direction of the action (i.e. action left-to-right.) Of course, many alternative and experimental methods are used in the film industry and camera movement is no exception.

**Dolly:** Cameras and other equipment, such as microphones and lights, are often carried around the set on movable platforms. These are dollies and are independently moved by the dolly grip so that the technician, be s/he cameraman, audio or lighting technician, can keep their concerns focused. Dollies are often run on tracks for special dolly pans, chinese dollies, or for mere structural smoothness. Most of the time, dollies are used for camera work and can include booms for the cameras which allows for the lowering, raising and pivoting of the camera. All of these shots can be achieved simultaneously with an horizontal movement of the camera upon the dolly track.

**Dolly Shot:** A camera perspective, on a moving or stationary subject, obtained while the camera is in motion on either a dolly or a camera truck. When the camera is so mounted and moves toward a closer proximity of the subject it is called «dolly-in»; likewise, when the camera is so mounted and moves away from the subject it is referred to as «dolly-out».

**Crane:** A large camera dolly that can raise the camera as much as twenty feet above the ground. The crane has the capacity to move forward and backward and is usually operated by electronic controls. Motions are generally silent and the crane allows shots to be made over a wide ranging area providing great access to cover shots.

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**Pan:** From the Greek «pan» meaning «all» this movement of the camera is achieved by moving the camera while turning it on an horizontal axis. At least four functions are served by this technique including an all encompassing view of the scene, a device for leading the audience to a particular person or place, following a person or vehicle across a distant scene, or giving the audience the visual images and perspective as seen by a character when turning her/his head.

**Zoom Shot:** A shot taken with a zoom lens in which the focal length of the lens changes from wide angle to long focus or the reverse so that the camera seems to move in to (i.e., «zoom in» to) or away from (i.e., «zoom out» from) the subject while the camera actually remains stationary.

(*Konigsberg, Ira. The Complete Film Dictionary. New York: Meridian, 1987.*)

### Section 2: In-class Activities

#### 1. Warm-Up

1). Invite students to brainstorm the basic «vocabulary» of film, and write ideas on the board. Their list might include opening shot, characters, setting, camera angle, shot, lighting, costumes, props, music/soundtrack, etc. Leave this list on the board to refer to throughout class.

2). Next, provide the following prompt:

Think of your morning as a collection of movie scenes. Freewrite about the key moments you've lived so far today – the anxiety of a classroom full of students awaiting a test, the fight you had with your little sister over your new boots, the embarrassing episode in front of the girl or boy you like, or even just what you ate for breakfast. Describe the scenes you choose in as much detail as possible, including dialogue whenever you can.

3). Once students have finished writing, have them form pairs or small groups of «filmmakers», with the task of choosing one group member's scene and imagining it as a scene in a movie by storyboarding. (If they are reluctant to share, allow them to work individually). After they choose their scene, they should talk about what they will need to think about and decide in turning the jottings into a movie scene.

Examples:

- Who are the «characters»?
- Where is the scene set?
- How will the scene open – what is the opening shot?
- What is the mood, and how can it be established – by music, other elements?
- What props are needed?

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- What action takes place in the scene?
  - What do the characters say to each other?
- 4). Ask students to draw rectangles in their journals to create storyboards, and sketch key bits in the scene in each rectangle. Underneath or next to each rectangle, they should jot down important information about that moment.
- 5). Once students have finished their planning, invite the groups to share their ideas. Discuss the following:
- Do you think these would really make for good movie moments? Why or why not?
  - What’s the difference between scenes we live and scenes we see in movies or read in books or plays?
  - How do directors shape the events of «real life» to make them story-worthy?
  - What is subtext?
  - What techniques can directors use to bring out subtext?
- 6). Tell students that today they will be reading films in the same way they read literary texts. Ask:
- Do you think you need to be familiar with a film’s subject or setting in order to fully «get» it? Why or why not?
  - How can films reinforce, or challenge, a viewer’s experience and opinions?
  - How can they introduce new ideas and experiences?
  - Can you think of any movies you have seen in which familiarity with the content helped you understand and enjoy it?
  - Can you think of any in which your unfamiliarity with the content opened your eyes?
- 7). You may wish to introduce the subject of the film they will consider first, Jason Reitman’s «Up in the Air» (based on the novel of the same name by Walter Kirn), whose main character is a frequent air traveler.

### **Lord of the Fliers**

**This novel’s hero fires people for a living and collects bonus miles for an obsession.**

*By CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY*

### **«UP IN THE AIR. By Walter Kirn»**

If Walter Kirn is anything like the protagonist of his new novel, he may be the first author thrilled to be embarking on a 30-city book tour. Not for the attention – for the miles. Quest novels usually have as their object a chalice once used at a famous supper, a sleeping fairy princess, a rusty key

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to a chest, a New World, a ring, the perfect martini, whatever. «Up in the Air» is the first – and will surely remain the best – novel about one man's quest to accumulate one million frequent flier miles. If this sounds like the dulllest quest in Christendom, set your worries at ease, sit back in your seat, rip open the little bag of pretzels and relax. You are about to embark on a truly wild ride.

Your seatmate, as you crisscross Western America, will be Ryan Bingham, 35, a career transition counselor at a Denver-based management consulting company. That is to say, he flies around the country firing people. Find a niche and empty it, you might say. He's a tragicomic fusion out of Martin Amis, Nicholson Baker and Jay McInerney on a good day. But that's no way to put it. Walter Kirn, not those others, came up with Ryan Bingham and he can take a deep bow. For all his problems, and does he ever have those, Ryan is as original and cool a character to come along in American fiction in a while. Into the bargain, Kirn is such a sharp writer he gives your brain paper cuts. Never have I so happily bled to death.

The plot: Ryan is trying desperately to get to one million before he leaves or is fired from his employer – Integrated Strategic Management, or ISM. He is divorced, which seems to be the norm these days for your basic alienated protagonist. His younger, psychologically disturbed sister is about to embark on yet another disastrous relationship. Ryan is angling to be hired by MythTech, a shadowy company in Omaha that turns out – no, I cannot give it away. (Kirn does provide a corker ending.) Ryan takes a lot of pills and connects with women and has boogie nights with them in Las Vegas – very boogie nights. Meanwhile, sitting in the back row of the airport chapel in Reno, he is convinced that someone is having him paged. Worse, someone may be furtively cashing in his precious miles. This prospect chills Ryan more than liquid nitrogen. It is tantamount to stealing his soul.

Ryan is one of those business guys you see at O'Hare or LAX, speaking into detached cell phone mikes as they pass by you on the moving sidewalk like figures on wheels to their connection at Gate 84. The world they (and we) inhabit is an American geography reconfigured into a series of – fittingly enough, as the great vast West was colonized by rolling wagons on spoked wheels – airline hubs. Finally, someone has come up with a name for it. «I call it Airworld; the scene, the place, the style», Ryan says. «My hometown papers are USA Today and The Wall Street Journal. The big-screen Panasonics in the club rooms broadcast all the news I need, with an emphasis on the markets and the weather. My literature – yours, too, I see – is the best seller or the near-best seller, heavy on themes of espionage, high finance and the goodness of common people in small towns. In Airworld, I've found, the passions and



enthusiasms of the outlying society are concentrated and whisked to a stiff froth. When a new celebrity is minted in the movie theaters or ballparks, this is where the story breaks – on the vast magazine racks that form a sort of trading floor for public reputations and pretty faces. I find it possible here, as nowhere else, to think of myself as part of the collective that prices the long bond and governs necktie widths. Airworld is a nation within a nation, with its own language, architecture, mood and even its own currency – the token economy of airline bonus miles that I've come to value more than dollars. Inflation doesn't degrade them. They're not taxed. They're private property in its purest form».

It's a place we're familiar with, even if we didn't know what it was called until now, where e-mail and voice mail are the communication norm, of Palm Pilots and rental cars, salted almonds and nameless suite hotels – you've got mail, J. Alfred Prufrock! – white noise machines, Kevlar luggage, and where you spend so much time that you know the flight attendants by name.

No, it's all right. It's fine. «Planes and airports are where I feel at home. Everything fellows like you» – remember that Ryan is sitting next to you – dislike about them – the dry recycled air alive with viruses; the salty food that seems drizzled with warm mineral oil; the aura-sapping artificial lighting – has grown familiar to me over the years, familiar, sweet».

That «you» is key, and I haven't heard the second-person singular used with such effective intimacy since «Bright Lights, Big City». Ryan's voice is also, one gradually begins to gather, the voice of a man who is, well, not well. That's not giving anything away. You would have figured it out soon enough. Suffice it to say this just provides another serrated edge to the story.

Among Ryan's endearing qualities is his philosophizing about everyday devices, marveling at contrivances that we take for granted and investing them with souls of their own. He rhapsodizes about the white-noise-making device he takes with him from hotel to hotel. «Lately, I can't sleep without these gadgets. The one I own now is tuned to 'summer cloudburst' and I can't wait to turn it on tonight». A cup of coffee and he's off and running: «The espresso machine whirrs and burbles at my touch, filling a cup exactly to the brim. The gizmo deserves to be thanked, it works so beautifully. People aren't grateful enough to such devices. Mute valets supply our every need, but instead of pausing in acknowledgment, we jump to the next thing, issue another order. I wonder if some imbalance is building up here, a karmic gap between humans and their tools. Machines will be able to think not long from now, and as the descendants of slaves, they won't be happy».

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He does wonder at some modern amenities: «The side-by-side urinals are filled with ice cubes, a touch I've never had properly explained to me». It's a tribute to Ryan's companionability that you find yourself wanting to explain it to him, if only you knew. To whom did it first occur that men like urinating into ice?

Kirm, who is the author of two previous novels («She Needed Me», «Thumbsucker») and a collection of stories («My Hard Bargain»), can get you into a Moment faster than a Zen master. Spotting a famous businessman a few rows away, Ryan muses: «Celebrities always seem slightly lost on planes. Five years ago, I found myself surrounded by a rock band I'd worshiped as a kid. Two of them sat alone in their own rows and two had girls with them. Their trademark hairstyles – tortured, spiky crests of dull black thatch – looked overdone in such a neutral setting. The drummer, an alleged hotel room smasher who'd supposedly had his blood replaced at an expensive clinic in Geneva, thumbed a hand-held video game. The singer, the star, sat still and stared ahead as though he'd lost power and was waiting for repairs. His fame seemed to call for a class beyond first, and I couldn't help but think less of him, somehow, for sharing a cabin with the likes of me».

That's an epiphany at 35,000 feet. Here's a vignette from ground level: «I was given a small beige office in the rear of the company's crumbling brick waterfront headquarters and tasked with the care of seven executives who were let go in sequence, one per day, and sent to me before their tears could dry. All were middle-aged men with families, and all but two of them asked me what they'd done wrong, to which I answered, 'Nothing. Blame interest rates. Blame low commodity prices. This problem's global.' One heavyset fellow, a face like a potpie, his suit full of strange custom seams to hide his girth, mistook me for a priest and made me kneel with him while he prayed from a card he carried inside his wallet. Another asked me if I would call his wife and repeat my interest rates remark».

A novel about a man who lives in a parallel world making his living counseling the downsized could hardly arrive – land – at a more apt time, in this season of dot-coma and summer-air-travel hell. But this is a book that will endure beyond its era. Ryan Bingham is our Man in the Casual Friday Suit, and he is sitting next to us. In fact, he may be us.

To evoke students' associations, ask:

- How many of you have been to an airport recently?
- If you've never flown, how do you imagine the airport experience?
- How does being in an airport feel?
- What process must travelers go through between arriving at the airport and boarding the plane?

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- What hassles are associated with flying?
- What would make the experience smoother and easier?
- If you were going to shoot a movie scene set in an airport, what details would you want to include?

8). Tell students they will now watch a scene from «Up in the Air», in which the lead character, Ryan Bingham, played by George Clooney, goes to the airport.

**2. Reading and discussion:** In «Anatomy of a Scene: «Up in The Air», director Jason Reitman describes how he shot the airport scene.

View the feature with your class, using the questions below. Notice that you can adjust the volume of the director’s commentary vs. the soundtrack of the scene itself with the slide bar at the right. First, show students the scene without commentary. Then, show it again, playing Mr. Reitman’s commentary.

### **Anatomy of a Scene: «Up in The Air»**

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/12/04/movies/20091204-upinTheAir.html?gwh=9B7AD8216B5607805FAB512A74155B31>

### **Questions for discussion and comprehension:**

- What do you notice most when watching this scene?
- Think about George Clooney’s line about the «systemized touches» of the airport experience – how does the way in which this scene was shot reflect this phrase?
  - What light does the director shed on this scene in his commentary?
  - How does it change the way you view the scene?
  - Do you think Mr. Reitman made the right choices – fast cut versus slow motion – for this scene? Why or why not? How does his choice affect you?

## **Section 3: Activities**

### **Activity 1.**

Show students another one or more additional «Anatomy of a Scene» features ([http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch?query=anatomy+of+a+scene&more=date\\_all](http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch?query=anatomy+of+a+scene&more=date_all)). Suggestions: the feature on «Precious», based on the novel «Push» by Sapphire, or, for younger students, «Fantastic Mr. Fox», based on the novel by Roald Dahl. Additionally, you might show students one or more clips from Critics’ Picks ([http://video.nytimes.com/video/playlist/arts/movies-critics\\_picks/1194811622317/index.html?gwh=0448F91EBB68B97C89D94863157D6A80](http://video.nytimes.com/video/playlist/arts/movies-critics_picks/1194811622317/index.html?gwh=0448F91EBB68B97C89D94863157D6A80)), in which Times movie critics discuss the highlights of selected movies.

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Depending on your curricular focus, you may wish to preselect and show features that have a certain focus. For example, in the «Up in the Air» feature, Mr. Reitman discusses how the scene was shot, and tells us a bit about character; in the one on «Precious», Lee Daniels explores the emotional undercurrents in the scene; and in «Fantastic Mr. Fox», Wes Anderson explains the visual imagery and technique. In the feature on «It's Complicated», Nancy Meyers discusses wardrobe, body language and subtext along with camera shots and angles; in the one on «Nine», Rob Marshall focuses on visual imagery, color and symbolism.

If the class's focus will be entirely or partly on acting and performances as opposed to filmmaking, you might show «The Best Performances of the Decade» (<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2010/02/15/magazine/1247467035861/the-best-performances-of-the-decade.html?gwh=86C3C4EF34AC21C5BOC3EAC5F229B6FF>).

Discuss the features with students, focusing on what light the director and/or critic, as appropriate, sheds on the film, and whether and how the commentary affects how viewers «read» the scene(s) shown.

Remind students that great films are constructed in the same careful way as great novels or plays, without stray scenes, images or lines. The best directors draw on their «intimate, comprehensive understanding of how sound and image work together to create meanings and moods», as A. O. Scott put it in his review of the Martin Scorsese film «Shutter Island». The choices made by the screenwriter, director, actor and other crew members are deliberate, and viewers' reactions are responses to these choices.

You may wish to delve more deeply into film terminology before going further. Guide students to think about how these film aspects and techniques cause reactions in viewers, and show them examples of some techniques.

### **Activity 2.**

Explain to students that they will now work in groups to create their own «Anatomy of a Scene» features. You might wish to select one of the following options as the foundation for the activity:

- Student-selected favorite films
- Teacher-selected films being taught as primary text or as part of a literary unit
- Students' own films

For a Shakespeare unit, for example, student groups might study the same scene from three different versions of a play like «Romeo and Juliet» or «Hamlet», and analyze how the scene works in each case, providing fodder for comparison.

Provide each pair or small group with the «Anatomy of a Scene» handout to guide their analysis.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **ANATOMY OF A SCENE**

Directions: Use these questions to analyze a key scene. When analyzing both film and literature, remember that how things are presented is as important as the things themselves. Everything is a conscious choice of the writer or director. Think about how each choice brings out meaning.

**Title of the work:**

**Director or author:**

#### **Character and Casting**

1. Who is in the scene?
2. What is each person's motivation in this scene? (In other words, what does each character want?)
3. What subtexts are at work here?
4. How does the casting influence how you see the characters?
5. How do costumes contribute to how you see the characters?

#### **Setting**

1. Where is the scene set?
2. Why/how is this setting significant?
3. What stands out about the setting?

#### **Context**

1. What is the context of this scene in the larger work?
2. What is the historical, cultural, and/or political context?

#### **Frame (mise-en-scene)**

1. What is in the shot?
2. What is centered?
3. What is excluded?
4. How do figures move within the frame?
5. Is the shot wide or long? A close-up?
6. What is in focus? Is anything blurred?
7. How is the frame lit?
8. What are the effects of the frame on viewers? How does how the scene is framed enhance meaning?

#### **Camera Work**

1. What camera angles are used here?
2. What point-of-view do the camera angles suggest? Is the camera acting as the eyes of a character? Or of the audience?

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3. How does the camera move? What effect does camera movement have on viewers?

4. Does the film use slow motion?

5. How is the film edited? Is the rhythm long (as in «Precious») or short and clipped (like in the «Up in the Air» clip)? What effect does the editing have on you?

### **Mood and Soundtrack**

1. Is there music? How and when is it used? What is its effect? What mood does it create?

2. Are there other sound effects?

3. Does the film make use of voiceovers? When? What is their effect?

4. How else besides music is the mood created?

### **Other**

1. What other details, such as props, are important in the scene? What are their function and effect?

2. What do you know about this director or writer? How does your knowledge of his or her work add to your understanding of this movie or book, and this particular scene?

*(Adapted in part from «The Basics of How to Read a Film» by Holly Blackford [http://wire.rutgers.edu/p\\_reading\\_film.html](http://wire.rutgers.edu/p_reading_film.html))*

### **«Anatomy of a Scene» Focus**

1. Which aspects of the scene do you plan to focus on for your «Anatomy» feature? Why?

2. What terms and techniques will help you explain your points?

3. What would you like viewers to notice, understand and think about this scene?

4. What specific points do you want to make? Start writing your script ideas here.

Make sure that they watch their chosen or assigned scenes numerous times; you may also want them to do some research on the movie and/or director to inform their own insights.

With their handouts complete and their focus in mind, students write and rehearse the scripts for their commentary, to be presented alongside the film clips.

Finally, have students present their «Anatomy of a Scene» features, by recording them on video or audio them and playing them alongside the film clips, or by turning the volume down on the film and reading the commentary aloud as their classmates watch the scene.

### Section 4. Going Further

Students apply the principles of «Anatomy of a Scene» to a textual scene, again using the handout to guide them. Options include these:

1. Assign or allow students to choose a scene they feel is pivotal in the work and write an «Anatomy»-style essay explaining why it is key to the plot or themes or to understanding characters in the work as a whole.

2. Students analyze their assigned or chosen a scene and create «Anatomy of a Scene» audios, videos or live presentations, as they did for the film.

3. Students analyze the scene in the source novel or play that corresponds to the film scene they looked at in class. Later, they compare the scene on the page to the scene on the screen.

4. Students choose a scene from the text you are studying and write a «pitch» describing how they would go about filming it and the specific choices they would make and why.

In a future class, have students share these textual analyses. To wrap up, discuss the differences and similarities between analyzing a visual medium like a movie and a textual one like a novel or play.

(From *The New York Times Learning Network*, February 18, 2010)