over the theaters. The itinerant exhibitor could show the same program of about ten films to new audiences. The permanent theaters, however, had fixed local audiences. To keep viewers coming, the theaters had to purchase new films in order to vary their programs. To solve this problem, a new middleman system evolved whereby distributors bought prints from producers and rented them to exhibitors, allowing permanent theaters to vary their programs with less cost because they no longer had to buy prints outright.

One consequence of the new rental system was the movement of film exhibition from vaudeville theaters, where they constituted only a part of the performance, to storefront operations called nickelodeons that were devoted solely to film exhibition. Nickelodeons derived their name from the original 5-cent price of admission. They sprang up in large numbers across the country, increasing from a few in 1904 to almost ten thousand over the next four years. By 1910, the nickelodeons drew huge crowds, "attracting some twenty-six million Americans every week, a little less than 20 per cent of the national population" (Merritt 86). During the nickelodeon boom, production companies multiplied their weekly output of film footage but still could not keep up with demand.

Under pressure for new films, producers came to realize that narrative films had several advantages over nonfiction films. Filmmakers intent on documenting a topical or sporting event had to wait until the event happened and then bear the cost of transporting men and equipment to the location, possibly during uncertain weather. Furthermore, events of great popular interest—elections, battles, tornadoes and floods—did not happen on a weekly schedule. With fictional films, production companies could avoid the delay, uncertainty, and expense of location shooting. Stories could be written and filmed as needed—producers didn't have to wait for anything, and they could shoot locales owned by the studios. It was simply cheaper and more convenient to make narrative films than documentary films. According to copyright records, by 1908, 96 percent of all films were either comic or dramatic narratives (Allen 212). Thus, in the early days of cinema, public enthusiasm and the needs of an emerging commercial industry provided the impetus for film to become a predominately narrative medium.

Why Adapt a Text?

If by 1908 cinema had reoriented itself to the task of storytelling, with its future set as a narrative art form, how does adaptation relate to this historical development?

First of all, when film production companies needed material to meet the growing demand for narrative movies, one alternative was to turn to short stories, novels, and plays. Here were ready-made scenes, plots, and characters. It was easier to adapt existing stories and plays than to invent new scenarios. Fur-

thermore, authors of literary texts did not have to be paid for film rights since copyright laws at the time did not cover motion pictures.

Another reason for adaptation in the early period of cinema was to borrow literature's prestige for the new art form. Nickelodeons were mainly concentrated in manufacturing cities with large populations of blue-collar workers and immigrants. Men and women working long hours in the factories found film viewing a relatively inexpensive form of pleasure and escape, and silent films were popular with immigrants because they posed no language problems. One contemporary survey reveals that "in 1911, 78 per cent of the New York [City] audience consisted of members 'from the working class' " (Merritt 87). Early on, nickelodeon owners sought to attract the middle class to their theaters. One way was by encouraging producers to make films that would appeal to middle-class women and children. Adaptation of classic literary works was a marketing device that exhibitors used to draw the middle class. Adapting such prestigious writers as Shakespeare, Zola, Tolstoy, Hugo, Dante, Dumas, and Dickens became a way to achieve a kind of legitimacy for filmgoing.

A third reason for adaptation comes from the notion that the purpose of motion pictures is to teach the masses about their literary heritage. In this view, film is a pedagogical medium useful for introducing literary masterpieces to contemporary audiences. The pedagogical view is more commonly held in England, where generations of film producers have adapted the Great Books. There have been so many British adaptations of Shakespeare that at times they are regarded as a separate category in adaptation studies. Other frequently adapted British authors include Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and E. M. Forster. Director James Ivory, producer Ismail Merchant, and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala have made successful careers by regularly adapting canonical works. And both the BBC and PBS reflect the pedagogical view when they adapt literary classics and then issue online study guides.

But the most common reason that commercial filmmakers adapt a printed text is that they believe the film will make money. Today a film from a major Hollywood studio costs an average of a hundred million dollars to produce and market. The rising cost of the Hollywood movie is likely to continue. A-list actors such as Tom Cruise and Julia Roberts are paid ever-increasing sums because studios know box-office hits are usually star-driven. Likewise, some directors are being rewarded with huge salaries and a percentage of gross profits. Peter Jackson, director of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003), received $20 million and 20 percent of the gross receipts for his remake of *King Kong* (2005). In movies such as *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003), special effects are as expensive as stars, with better effects needed each year to attract viewers. Marketing spending has also ballooned because of increasingly expensive TV advertising.

Ticket prices have risen as well, but domestic receipts rarely cover movie costs. Today studios know the bulk of a film's revenue will come from worldwide

release, DVDs, videocassettes, network and cable TV, soundtrack albums, video games, and commercial tie-ins.

Despite new revenue sources, filmmaking remains a big gamble. Hollywood executives know they cannot pretest the market before they make a movie and they know that they produce far more disasters than hit films. How can they predict which project will make back its initial investment and then some? With budgets dauntingly high, executives tend to green-light projects that minimize risk, such as prequels, sequels, remakes, special-effects extravaganzas, and adaptations.

Film companies know that literary texts, whether classics from the Western canon or popular literature likely never to enter the canon, are good candidates for filmmaking because their stories have already proven to be enjoyable to many people. A story's popularity comes in two ways: It can be popular over time to many generations—a literary classic; or, it can be widely popular to a contemporary audience—a best seller. The popularity of either kind of text is likely to translate into a box office success, or at least that's the basic assumption.

The classic story has proved it can hold audience appeal over time, and the marketing of the film will benefit from name recognition of the author, title, or story. Think of the many adaptations made of Shakespeare's plays or Dickens's novels. Similarly, the bestseller is "pre-kissed," meaning it has a wide audience already and one that is likely to follow the story into the theater. Recent examples of bestsellers that have drawn huge film audiences include J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings.* One thinks also of best-selling novels like John Grisham's *The Firm,* Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park,* Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October,* and Robert James Waller's *The Bridges of Madison County.* Today, whether the work is a classic story or a best seller, it most likely reaches the screen because studio executives believe it is a safe bet to make money.

A less common reason for adaptation, but one worth mentioning, is that a powerful person (say, a producer, star, or director) becomes committed to a text. For example, Oprah Winfrey was the leading force behind the adaptation of Toni Morrison's *Beloved.* Soon after the novel was published, Winfrey acquired the film rights. She hired at least three screenwriters over the next ten years to adapt the story, and, after it was finally made in 1998, ceaselessly promoted it. Steven Spielberg optioned Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List,* developed the project over a decade, and then directed the film *Schindler's List* (1993), which allowed him to make a personal, public, and artistic statement about the Holocaust and genocide in general. Mel Gibson spent $30 million of his own money and used his Hollywood influence and connections to make *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), a film that shows the last twelve hours of Jesus' life, based on incidents from the four Gospels. " 'There was no way this movie wasn't going to happen,' " Gibson said. " 'I just know that I was compelled to (make it)' " (Cava 1).

Cinema's early turn to narrative and its sustained use of literary texts for more than a hundred years have given the opportunity to adapt to countless

The controversial adaptation *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) made it to the screen because of Mel Gibson's personal commitment.

directors, screenwriters, producers, and studios. Filmmakers will continue to make adaptations for various and overlapping reasons, but never without encountering difficulty in negotiating the differences between the two art forms. Some of these differences will be discussed in Chapter 3.

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LITERARY AND FILM TERMS

Cinema's turn to narrative was not inevitable. Cinema could have developed into a documentary form or some kind of non-narrative sound and image entertainment. But in the twenty-first century, most films tell stories. Because films are primarily fictional narratives, they require an understanding of terms traditionally associated with literature. Of course, films use images and sound in ways that go far beyond verbal language, so the student needs to understand the basic terms and techniques of filmmaking as well. Without such terms, it would be hard to describe how film adaptation works, just as it would be hard to describe how a computer works without a technical vocabulary. The important terms are defined in this chapter and at the end of the book in the glossary. Keep in mind that literary and film critics have developed far more elaborate definitions than the ones introduced here.

Literary Terms

Because screenwriters often reorder the events in a story to be adapted, it is useful to keep in mind a distinction between **story** and **plot**. The *story* is a succession of events involving characters told in chronological order. But *plot* refers to the selection and arrangement of events so that they are interdependent and causally related and their outcome, given the characters and initial situation, seems inevitable. The story's happenings, then, are raw material. Plot selects the happenings, puts them in some sequential order (not necessarily chronological), and establishes causality.

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster gives a now famous example of this distinction between story and plot. According to Forster, to say that "the king died and the queen died" is to tell a story because the two events are not logically related. But to say that "the king died and then the queen died of grief" is to establish a plot. The added three words explain that an event happened and that it had a consequence. The causal link converts story into plot.

Plot is a structural device that enables the author and screenwriter to maintain causal links while presenting events outside the constraints of chronological order. For example, an author or adapter need not start at the beginning of the story but can begin *in medias res* (in the middle of things) and then flash back to show past events that led up to the present, or flash forward to indicate future consequences. A screenwriter may also decide to rearrange events so that the source's ending becomes the film's beginning. For example, *The Ice Storm* (1997), directed by Ang Lee, begins with the ending of Rick Moody's novel of the same name and then backs up to the period before the deadly ice storm. These changes in chronological order are often made to elicit emotional reactions such as surprise or suspense or an impending sense of doom.

Plot is usually divided into three parts following Aristotle's *The Poetics:* a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some critics use Gustav Freytag's expanded definition of Aristotle's tripartite structure: **exposition, rising action, climax, falling action,** and **catastrophe.** (The last event is also called **resolution** or **dénouement**). The exposition or introduction establishes the place and time of the action, introduces the character or characters, gives any necessary background information, and establishes the mood or tone of the story. The rising action introduces a conflict, or complication, that intensifies the original situation and moves towards a major turning point or climax. The downward or falling action shows events going from bad to worse, leading to some final reversal of fortune for the protagonist.

There are other forms of plot one can identify that are not dominated by cause and effect. A **nontraditional plot** may present events in nonlinear sequence, use coincidence rather than causality to link events, and leave the resolution indeterminate or open-ended. William S. Burroughs's novel *Naked Lunch* is an example of nonlinear narration.

Some stories consist of a series of episodes that are loosely related by the presence of a hero, a specific location, a theme, or a historical event. An example of an **episodic plot** is Henry Fielding's eighteenth-century novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling.* The first section of the novel is set at the country home of Tom's guardian Squire Allworthy; the middle chapters describe a complicated set of adventures that takes place on the roads to London; and the final third of the novel is set in London. What ties together the settings and scenes is the presence of the title hero.

Plots are sometimes distinguished by their mood and outcome. **Comic plots** usually end with a happy event such as the marriage in Shakespeare's *As You Like It,* whereas **tragic plots** may end with the protagonist's isolation and death as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* **Subplots** are minor or subordinate actions often used to contribute interest and action to the main plot.

Some critics identify character rather than plot as the defining feature of narrative. In this view, plot is a framework of actions that focuses attention on character. The character's desires, motives, or goals lead to action. However, when someone claims a story is more character-driven than plot-driven, keep in mind that character and action are often so intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. In sophisticated narratives, action grows out of character and character grows out of action.

Character is a personality on paper or film. In literary fiction, characters are often described both *outwardly* and *inwardly.* We come to know one through what he or she does, says, and looks like, or through the opinions and reactions of others. We may also get to know a character inwardly through an omniscient author's presentation of the character's thoughts and feelings or through a narrator's direct commentary. In film, however, characters are usually portrayed *outwardly only*—through their appearance, dress, speech, expressions, gestures, and movements, or through the reactions and comments of other characters. Filmmakers use camera movement and angles, lighting, color contrasts, editing, and other devices to reveal character. But unless a device such as a voiceover is used, we don't know *exactly* what the character is thinking nor do we hear a narrator's direct comments on the character's inner life.

Forster distinguishes between flat and round characters. A **flat character** is a one-dimensional type, known by a single idea or quality; in contrast, a **round character** possesses the multidimensional qualities of actual people. Characters can also be divided into **static characters,** who do not change, and **developing characters,** who do. The terms suggest that both literary and screen characters can be distinguished by their complexity and depth. Many are single-trait characters who exist on the surface; others are defined by a number of traits and suggest inner states of thought and feeling that sometimes are in conflict. For example, in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon,* Sam Spade's partner Miles Archer is a flat character distinguished by his sexual interest in a female client and his greed for money, but Spade is much more layered: he is a tough, cynical detective who displays a number of inner

conflicts, such as his dislike for his partner but his loyalty to him after Miles is killed.

When a specific character seems to be the focus of the story, he or she is called a **protagonist.** Hester Prynne is the protagonist in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter,* and Othello is the protagonist in Shakespeare's *Othello.* If the protagonist is in a major conflict with another character, that character is called the **antagonist.** An example is Iago, who, resentful at being passed over for promotion, makes Othello jealous in order to undermine him.

Setting is the geographical place, the historical time, and the social milieu in which the characters live and act. It includes the cultural and historical conditions that provide an intellectual and emotional context for the characters' thoughts and beliefs. Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* is set in early nineteenth-century London, among the middle and lower classes, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is set in Hannibal, Missouri, and along the Mississippi River during the antebellum South, among several classes of river-town folk.

Point of view refers to the vantage point from which a narrative is presented. To decide on point of view, ask, "Who is telling the story?" and "Are we told the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters?" Literary works sometimes combine points of view, but the most common are the **first person** and the **third person.** In first-person narration, the narrator refers to himself or herself as "I" and is a major or minor character, or merely a witness of events. "Call me Ishmael," the famous first line of Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick,* signals to the reader that events will be filtered through Ishmael's eyes.

Third-person narration uses the pronouns "he," "she," and "they" to tell the story. This point of view has two important subdivisions: (1) the **omniscient** or all-knowing narrator and (2) the **third-person limited** or **limited-omniscient** narrator. The omniscient narrator has complete knowledge of the inner and outer lives of all of the characters and is able to move freely from one to another. This narrator may also choose to comment directly on the characters or their actions. Omniscient narrators are often subdivided into **intrusive**—those who make judgments on characters or actions as they are presented—or **unintrusive** or **impersonal**—those who introduce characters or events neutrally without evaluation.

Third-person limited or limited-omniscient narration presents the story as it is seen, thought, felt, or remembered by one or more characters. Often, the author restricts knowledge to what a single character knows and perceives and does not go into the minds of other characters. Many famous novels have used the omniscient point of view—for example, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* Other literary works have used the more restrictive limited-omniscient narration, such as Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage,* Melville's "Benito Cereno," Henry James's *The Ambassadors,* and James Joyce's "The Dead."

There is also the **objective or dramatic** point of view, which uses the third person and is limited to recounting what characters say or do. The objective narrative does not relate what characters think or feel nor comment directly on their actions. The story is told almost completely through dialogue. Ernest Hemingway's short stories "Hills Like White Elephants" and "The Killers" are examples of the objective point of view.

Determining point of view helps in understanding a story. For the first-person narration, ask, "Who is the narrator? How does his or her personality shape the story? Is the narrator accurate or is the reader expected to see the narrator as untrustworthy and discount his or her interpretations of events?" For the omniscient point of view, ask, "Does the author use the omniscient point of view for its flexibility in shifting point of view or for its ability to reveal maximal information about the inner lives of all of the characters in a work?" For the limited omniscient, ask, "Does the author choose this point of view because there is information the author wants to withhold from the reader in order to achieve an artistic effect such as mystery or suspense?"

Like literary works, films narrate stories from a certain perspective, and recognizing a film's point of view can be important in interpreting its meaning. The most common points of view in film parallel those in literature: first person, omniscient, and limited omniscient. However, it is difficult to apply the literary definitions of point of view directly to film because the two forms express point of view differently and because literature and film have different capacities for conveying perspective. Therefore, many critics talk about analogies or parallels between literary and cinematic points of view.

In a literary work, the first-person point of view is made clear through the narrator's sustained use of "I." For example, in J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye,* readers are constantly reminded that events are filtered through the single consciousness of Holden Caulfield by his distinctive teenage "voice." To replicate first-person narration, a film adapter often uses (1) the narrator's voice in a **voiceover**—an offscreen voice that supplies background or commentary on screen images—and (2) visual strategies to identify the camera with the narrator's perspective. For example, many adaptations are based on first-person retrospective narratives in which a character in the present recalls events from the past. To suggest this point of view, a film may begin with a narrative frame that briefly introduces the narrator in the present before he or she becomes a participant in the story's *past* events. The transition from present to past usually is handled by a voiceover and a **dissolve**—the end of one shot superimposed on the beginning of another. The beginning of *Double Indemnity* (1944) shows an office scene in which the narrator, insurance salesman Walter Neff, speaking into a Dictaphone, confesses a murder he committed "for money and for a woman." "It all began last May," he says, as the office dissolves into a exterior scene showing Neff driving up to that woman's house "to check," his voiceover explains, "about an auto renewal." The voiceover and the office scene return throughout the movie to remind the

audience of point of view until the end when past events catch up to Neff's present, and he is shown slumped in his office chair, wounded and bleeding, talking directly to the claims officer investigating the case. The use of the narrative frame, voiceover, and dissolve help to establish and sustain the film's first-person narration.

Another common strategy in narrated films is to use a series of shots to tie the camera to the narrator's field of vision. Point-of-view shots may show the narrator looking at something offscreen, followed by a shot of the space toward which the character is looking (using the narrator's visual perspective), and then a shot of the narrator's reaction to what is seen. Although the camera's positions in the first and third shots are not identical with the narrator's physical position, the shots, taken together, suggest that events are seen through his or her eyes.

In narrated films, the knowledge the audience is given may be restricted to what the narrator knows or could know. This can be done by having the camera show only scenes the narrator is involved in and not showing scenes where the narrator is not included or those the narrator could not know about. Through these and other strategies, viewers are led to see that the story depends on the narrator's perspective and that the events are shaped by this character's values and attitudes. However, in film, the first-person point of view is hard to sustain. Even when reminded by voiceovers, viewers forget that the events are filtered through a character because the camera shows them as if they were unfolding directly before the viewers' eyes.

The most common point of view used in films is some form of third-person narration. Third-person omniscient narration tells the story from multiple perspectives signaled by frequent shifts in camera position. The camera moves freely from one character to another, from one place to another, and from one angle to another without identifying itself with any one character's point of view. Omniscient narration need not restrict the audience's knowledge as in first-person and limited-omniscient narration. In fact, sometimes the audience is given more knowledge of a situation than the characters in the scene, which is often the case in horror and suspense films. For example, in *Jaws* (1975), directed by Steven Spielberg, theme music by John Williams is used to signal the approach of a shark, letting the audience know of the danger before the vulnerable swimmer does. The omniscient perspective knows all and can decide to withhold details or give them to the audience, but whatever information is given does not need to come through any single character.

Filmmakers sometimes use the third-person, limited-omniscient point of view, where the camera shows events mainly from the perspective of one or two characters. For example, *Rear Window* (1954), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, concerns Jeff, a magazine photographer, who breaks his leg and is confined to a wheelchair in his New York City apartment. While he recuperates, Jeff views his apartment neighbors out his "rear window," which looks out on a courtyard, through the telephoto lens of his camera. Most camera angles are shot from Jeff's apartment, so the audience is mainly restricted to his point of view.

Of course, with this point of view, the camera may still act at times as an omniscient narrator by offering information outside the view of the main characters.

Most films tell stories using thousands of shots from different angles. These films repeatedly shift among the three main points of view to achieve different aesthetic effects. The questions to ask are, "What point of view is being used in this series of shots?" and, when the perspective shifts, "Why did the director decide to change the point of view in this sequence?"

Another important literary figure useful for film analysis is the symbol. A **symbol** is something in a text or in a film that represents something else, often an idea or an attitude. Symbols can be objects, persons, places, or events. For example, an American flag is a physical object, usually made of cloth, but it stands for an entire nation. The symbol is not simply verbal. It is some element represented as physically present in a work of art but that nonetheless signifies something beyond its literal meaning.

Symbols derive their associations from long tradition or acquire their meanings from their use in a specific work of art. For example, through long association, a crossroads traditionally means a decision, a rose represents love, and spring and winter suggest birth and death. But authors and filmmakers can go beyond the use of these universal symbols to create their own by stipulating a link between a specific thing, person, place, or event and a general idea. For example, Hawthorne's use of the scarlet "A" makes it stand, at least initially, for adultery; Hemingway's use of rain in *A Farewell to Arms* associates it with death; and Orson Welles's use of the sled "Rosebud" in *Citizen Kane* (1941) associates it with Kane's lost childhood.

The main idea, or the central generalization, implied or stated in a work is called the **theme.** For example, the subject of a mystery may be homicide, but the theme or "message" may be that crime never pays or that everyone must respect limits. The dominating idea or generalization is made tangible through its depiction in character, action, and imagery. Most complex works have a number of themes, and when making statements about them, care must be taken to present supporting evidence. Some recent critics question whether a work contains an identifiable theme or set of themes and stress instead the indeterminacy of texts.

Film Terms

The following terms describe basic elements used in telling a story cinematically. The terms refer to four main areas of film: (1) mise-en-scène, (2) camerawork, (3) editing, and (4) sound.

Mise-en-Scène

Mise-en-scène refers to all elements placed before the camera. These elements include sets, costumes, lighting, makeup, props, placement of objects and people, and the actors' gestures and movements.

Alan Ladd as the title character in *Shane* (1953) dressed in buckskins, a costume suggesting the time and place of action as the American West of the nineteenth century.

Sets are real or artificially constructed places used as background for actions. They are the physical space shown by the camera in which the actors move. For example, the detective office in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) was artificially constructed on a sound stage at Warner Bros. Studios; however, the Big Blackfoot River, portrayed in *A River Runs Through It* (1992), was shot on location on five different rivers in Montana. Although sets in films often appear natural or accidental, they are carefully selected and controlled by set designers who, in conjunction with the director, cinematographer, and others, wish to achieve certain visual effects in telling a story.

Costuming is the clothing worn by actors. The clothes can be contemporary or historical, suggest the time and place of the action, indicate a character's social status, and contribute to the color scheme of the film. For example, Alan Ladd as the title character in *Shane* (1953) dresses in a light-colored buckskin shirt and pants, suggesting the frontier period of the film and his social distinction from the denim-clad farmers he defends.

Left: Nicole Kidman, a glamorous star, arriving at the Critics' Choice Awards, January 17, 2003, in Beverly Hills, California. Right: Virginia Woolf, the British novelist, crtitic, and essayist, ca. 1936.

Lighting is the illumination of actors and sets in the production of a film. A cinematographer decides whether the light is natural or artificial, the direction it should take, and its intensity. Lighting can direct attention toward major areas of interest such as an actor's face. An example is the light flaring up from the just-struck match that illuminates the sinister visage of Perry Smith as played by Robert Blake in *In Cold Blood* (1967).

Lighting also can help create mood and atmosphere through its design. The major types are high- and low-key lighting. With **high-key lighting,** a scene is brightly lit and shadows kept at a minimum. High-key lighting generally creates a buoyant and joyful mood and is often used in comedies and musicals such as *South Pacific* (1958), *My Fair Lady* (1964), and *The Sound of Music* (1965). With **low-key lighting,** a scene is dimly lit and there is a good deal of shadow. Low-key lighting creates a darker, harsher, and more somber mood and is often used in mystery, horror, drama, and science fiction films such as *The Big Sleep* (1946), *Alien* (1979), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and *Blade Runner* (1982).

Makeup emphasizes the mobile—and thus meaningful and representative—elements of an actor's face. The cosmetics enhance or change an actor's natural appearance in a way appropriate to the role he or she is playing. An example of a challenging assignment was the use of a prosthetic nose and makeup to

Nicole Kidman, made up as Virginia Woolf in *The Hours* (2003), illustrates how an actor's natural appearance might be altered to suit the role he or she is playing.

transform the glamorous Nicole Kidman into the plain-looking character of author Virginia Woolf in *The Hours* (2002).

Props are any items employed on a set or in a scene. These objects can be a stationary part of the set such as a table or a chair, or moveable items like a book or a vase. The selection, placement, and movement of props can reinforce the realism or authenticity of the setting and add meaning to a film. For example, the childhood objects placed in the opening montage of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) may suggest to viewers that the story will concern childhood experiences and even a child's point of view.

Camerawork

The **shot** is the basic unit of film. The shot is a single, continuous run of the camera that records an uninterrupted action that viewers see on the screen. Shots are generally divided into four types according to how much of the human figure is shown: long shot, medium shot, close-up, and extreme close-up. The three most important shots to be able to identify are the **long shot,** which shows the full human figure of a character or characters within an environment; the **medium shot,** which shows a character or characters from the knees up within part of the setting; and the **close-up,** which shows the full head and shoulders of a character or an object in detail. For example, in *Quiz Show* (1994), a long shot shows the set of the game show *Twenty-One* with the two

contestants standing inside their separate, soundproof booths and the game-show host standing at a podium just below them, thus establishing the configuration of the three principal characters in the scene. Later in the scene, a close-up shot of one of the contestants deciding on an answer to a question shows the real (or, as revealed even later in the film, pretend) anguish on the contestant's face.

Camera angle is the camera's position in relation to the subject being photographed. There are three main angles: the **high angle,** in which the camera looks down on the subject; the **straight-on** or **eye-level angle,** in which the camera looks straight ahead at the subject; and the **low angle,** in which the camera looks up at the subject. Within the context of the film, camera angles may add meaning to the subject being filmed. For example, a high-angle shot may diminish a character and make him or her seem helpless and vulnerable. A low-angle shot may make a figure seem towering and powerful. A straight-angle shot usually suggests neutrality toward the subject. In *All the President's Men* (1976), a high-angle shot of Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward sitting at a desk and searching through withdrawal slips from the Library of Congress diminishes the two men within the enormous space of the room and minimizes their significance as reporters from the *Washington Post* who seek answers to the Watergate affair. Later in the film, Woodward and a male friend of his with close contacts within the Nixon administration, whom Woodward nicknames "Deep Throat," meet in a parking garage late at night. The low-angle shots of the two men talking conspiracy increase their physical stature and enlarge the significance of their illuminating discussions.

Camera movement refers to any motion of the camera that changes the camera's perspective on its subject. Common camera movements include tilting, panning, tracking, and crane shots. A **tilt shot** involves the camera moving upward or downward, thereby scanning the scene vertically while remaining fixed on a tripod or mount. For example, a tilt shot may follow a person ascending or descending a flight of stairs. In *Double Indemnity,* after Walter Neff has killed Mr. Dietrichson, he returns to his apartment by climbing the back stairway, so as not to be seen. The camera tilts upward as it follows Neff's surreptitious climb toward apparent freedom. A **pan shot** moves left or right, scanning the scene horizontally yet remaining in a fixed position. For example, a pan shot may follow a person crossing a room or a street. In the credits shot of *The Killers* (1946), after the last title card has been displayed, the two would-be killers approach the camera; it pans left to follow their movement to a closed gas station where their intended victim works, pans right as they move away from the station and look across the street at a diner, and pans even further to the right as they walk toward the diner and their planned ambush of their victim. A **tracking shot** moves forward, backward, or laterally, moving toward, away, with, or around the subject. The camera is not in a fixed position but travels on a track or dolly following a moving subject, such as a person walking down a sidewalk. At other times, the subject remains fixed, and the camera

tracks toward, away, or around the subject. In *The Swimmer* (1968), Ned Merrill races a horse along a pasture fence and holds his own with the animal, much to his smiling satisfaction. The camera also holds its own as it tracks the two of them, the sprinting Merrill and the loping horse. A **crane shot** occurs when the camera is mounted high on a crane and moves in any direction, often with an ascending or descending motion. The crane shot offers a bird's-eye view of the action. The high-angle shot of Bernstein and Woodward in the Library of Congress, mentioned before, begins as a conventional camera placement for a high angle, but then the camera ascends through a series of dissolves to become a crane shot from the top of the room's very tall ceiling, thus minimizing the two reporters to mere specks in the vast room.

Editing

Editing refers to the twofold job of choosing the best camera shots taken and then joining these shots together to build a scene, a sequence, and ultimately a completed movie. These joins, or transitions, can take the form of a **fade-in,** in which the beginning of a shot goes gradually from dark to light, usually signaling the beginning of a scene; a **fade-out,** in which the end of a shot goes gradually from light to dark, usually signaling the end of a scene; a dissolve, in which the end of one shot is for a moment superimposed with the beginning of the next shot, usually suggesting a close cinematic and/or narrative connection between two scenes; a **wipe,** in which the end of one shot appears to be pushed aside by the beginning of the next shot, also suggesting a close cinematic and/or narrative connection between two scenes or two shots within scenes; a **cut,** in which the end of one shot is simply spliced to the beginning of the shot that immediately replaces it on the screen, used either between scenes or between shots within scenes; and a **jump cut,** in which one shot is replaced abruptly with another shot that is mismatched in a way that calls attention to the cut and jars the viewer.

Within a scene, whatever transition device the film editor uses creates a relationship of continuity or discontinuity between two shots in terms of their photographic elements. If the two shots are similar, then the film editor has created a **graphic match** between the two shots; if the two shots are different, the film editor has created a graphic variance.

When the matches are assembled in such a way as to relate a story clearly, concisely, and with unity and cohesion, the film editor in conjunction with the director has created continuity within the film. Various strategies of editing contribute to **continuity editing.** Among these strategies are **crosscutting,** which uses alternating shots of at least two strands of action happening in different places at the same time; **establishing shots,** which show in long shots and extreme long shots the characters and the objects in spatial relation to one another within the setting; **eyeline matches,** in which a character in one shot is shown looking in a direction and in the next shot the space toward which the

character is looking is shown; **match on action,** in which one shot of an action is replaced by another shot of the same action in the same moment but from a different focal view, so there appears to be no interruption to the action; and **shot/reverse shot,** in which at least two shots joined together show first one character and then another character talking to each another.

An example of continuity editing occurs in the fight scene between the Maclean brothers in *A River Runs Through It,* which we discuss in detail in Chapter 3. An establishing shot shows the brothers in their family kitchen, Norman sitting at the table ready to eat a sandwich and Paul entering and beginning to advise his older brother on how to make a better sandwich. Once the fight over fixing the sandwich begins, eyeline-match shots show each brother angrily confronting his offscreen adversary and sizing up the next opportunity to throw a punch. Match-on-action shots show the successful punches landing and driving each brother either against a kitchen wall or against the kitchen sink. Crosscutting shots alternate between the battling brothers and their mother's entrance into the kitchen from another door, her alarm at their fighting, and her rush to stop it by mistakenly getting between them. Shot/reverse shots show the brothers' furious reactions and name calling after their mother slips and falls down on the floor between them. A reestablishing shot shows their mother getting up without their assistance and quietly leaving while the brothers stare at each other without saying another word or throwing one more punch.

Opposed to continuity editing is **disjunctive editing,** which emphasizes the cut from one shot to another. The variances among shots can be in terms of space, time, or visual patterns, and the goals may be to disturb the viewer or to interrupt or undercut the story's verisimilitude. After the conclusion of the scene described in the previous paragraph, at the end of the shot showing Mrs. Maclean leaving her kitchen and her two boys staring at one another, there is a cut to a downward tilted, extreme long shot that shows the brothers and their father fly-fishing together. The variances between the two shots are in terms of space, time, and visual pattern. The viewer is transported from the cramped kitchen/boxing arena in the early morning to the spacious, sunny outdoors where, according to the voiceover narrated by the elderly Norman, the brothers have gone back to being gracious to one another as their faith prompted them to behave. The goal of this disjunctive editing is to interrupt the antagonism between the brothers and to suggest a sudden and steadfast reconciliation between them, expressed through their common love of fly-fishing and respect for religious teaching.

The term **montage** can be used in a general sense to indicate any kind of editing, but it has come to refer to an editing technique that juxtaposes dissimilar shots, calls attention to their discontinuity, and thus leads the viewer to make conscious connections among the images. The assemblage of contrasting and conflicting images achieves a significance that goes beyond the meaning implicit in any of the individual shots.

The opening sequence of *A River Runs Through It* is an example of a montage. This series of juxtaposed, dissimilar shots, filmed by Philippe Rousselot, is made up of fourteen still, black-and-white, mostly archival photographs of life in Montana during the time period in which the film is set. Each shot is straight on, runs from between four and eight seconds, tracks forward in order to carry the viewer nearer to observe the detail in the characteristically extreme long-shot photographs, and then dissolves into the next still life.

The first two shots are of still photographs featuring, in a formal pose, Norman and Paul as children by themselves, and then, in another formal pose, Norman and Paul, again as children, accompanied by their parents. These two photographs are followed by a series of photographs presenting Montana life in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These are comprised of a river flowing through a countryside, a dirt street running through a town, another dirt street, a horse and wagon on a dirt street running through a settlement, a settlement located at the bottom of a mountain range, a bunch of loggers posed around a pile of logs, another bunch of loggers standing in a camp, a church standing near a bridge spanning a river, people posed in a field, more people standing in front of a city hall whose façade is covered with huge U.S. flags, a woman with two boys standing on a tree-lined street, and, lastly, another church. Taken together, these contrasting and conflicting images suggest this film is the story of a small family living in a place that is a civic- and religious-minded community whose way of living is intimately joined to nature.

Sound

There are four types of **sound** heard in films: speech, music, sound effects, and silence. **Speech** is **dialogue,** or character discourse, spoken by the actors onscreen or spoken by the actors offscreen, as in voiceover narration. Sometimes a character is seen alone on screen but is not speaking, while the voice of the character is heard on the sound track thinking about something, as in the black-and-white sequences in *Memento* (2001). Dialogue conveys background information; expresses the thoughts and feelings of the characters about actions, the behavior of other characters, or features of the setting; and distinguishes each character by language idiom.

Music refers to the score composed to establish structural patterns throughout a scene, a sequence, or the entire film, and to evoke emotional reactions in the audience. Structural patterns assist in establishing the atmosphere of a setting; they supply background for an otherwise mundane scene of unexciting visual content, or to fulfill an industry strategy of having music in every scene from start to finish; they provide continuity, or smooth transitions and flow, from shot to shot and scene to scene; and they underscore the climax and conclusion of scenes. The score influences the audience's emotional reactions to the action and characters in a particular scene, a sequence, or the entire film. In

Rashômon (1950), music phrases are linked to major characters in the film for viewer identification and emotional association.

Sound effects are noises made by people and objects situated within the scene shown. These consist of **ambient sound,** or background noises in a scene, such as people opening or closing a door, water running in a stream, or automobile horns blaring in city traffic. Ambient sound also consists of noises made by people or objects performing significant actions such as someone crying or laughing, a gun firing, or a bridge collapsing. Sound effects can be used for comic purposes. For example, in *The Simpsons'* adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1989), Homer, the speaker of the poem, says:

> *Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning*
> *Soon again I heard a tapping something louder than before.*
> *Surely, said I, surely that is something at my window lattice;*
> *Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore.* (31–34)

The "tapping something louder than before" is represented in the film as a loud banging whose force shakes the frame and disturbs the delicate assonance in the Scholar's lines.

The total absence of sound in a scene is called a **dead track.** The absence breaks the expected sound pattern of dialogue, music, and effects established in the film up to that point; surprises the audience; makes the audience concentrate on the image; and creates anxiety and anticipation in the audience as it waits for sound to resume. That resumption may be in the form of an unforeseen, startling noise.

In *Dracula* (1931), directed by Tod Browning, Renfield, who has fainted, is approached by three of Dracula's wives in an apartment within Dracula's castle. Dracula himself appears in the window, waves them off, and then approaches Renfield for the first drink of his blood. This brief scene is silent from the time Renfield feels the room is stuffy, goes to the window to open it, is accosted by a bat (which does squeal for a moment), and faints, until the fade-out with Dracula bending over Renfield's limp body. The first shot of the next scene shows a storm-tossed sailing ship with the sound of whistling wind on the sound track. The sudden absence of sound in the fainting scene interrupts the pattern established up to then, surprises the viewer, and makes the viewer concentrate on the bizarrely costumed, emaciated figures of the wives. It also heightens Dracula's suddenly hostile behavior toward Renfield, whom up until now he has treated with businesslike courtesy.

Sound is either **diegetic** or **nondiegetic.** Diegetic sound is produced within a screen space. For example, characters talk, make noise, or play a musical instrument in a room. Nondiegetic sound does not occur within the screen space. An offstage voiceover and music score are examples. One way to distinguish between diegetic and nondiegetic sound is to ask whether the characters *and* the audience are meant to hear the sounds (diegetic) or whether the sounds are intended *solely* for the audience (nondiegetic). In the example of camera

tracking from *The Swimmer,* mentioned earlier, Ned Merrill and the horse he is racing do not hear the music we hear on the sound track, yet the rousing music expresses an excitement about their race that the man and the horse might actually be feeling; thus, the nondiegetic music helps the viewer to experience the emotions of the characters on screen.

Literature and film share many terms. Analysis of both forms involves talking about character, setting, action, theme, and symbolism. But film requires its own special vocabulary to describe how images and sounds tell stories. Both sets of terms will be useful in the following chapters where we explore the ways filmmakers adapt literature to film.