

Visual Storytelling, Shot Styles and Composition

Objectives:

Students will know/be able to...

- >> Understand the role of shot styles, camera movement, and composition in telling a story
- >> Recognize the concepts of balance as related to framing a shot, and be able to use them to achieve their desired result
- >> Identify different shot styles and their uses
- >> Tell a story visually

Materials:

- SHIFT Drive *Let Them Eat Cake*
- *Shot Styles Examples* Handout
- SHIFT Drive *Shot Styles and Composition*
- Popular Culture Movie (optional)
- *Shot Styles* Handout
- *Shot Styles Teacher Key*

Equipment:

- Video camera connected to a TV or projector

>> ACTIVITIES

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Show SHIFT Drive *Let Them Eat Cake*, a short story told only using visuals, music, and sound effects. Ask students how the filmmakers tell their story without dialogue? These techniques are known as visual storytelling. Below are some common visual storytelling techniques.

- Acting
- Editing and pacing
- Costumes
- Music and sound effects
- Shot selection/cinematography
- Props
- Locations and scenery
- Lighting

2. Next, mount the camera onto a tripod and use your cable to connect it to a television, monitor, or projector to be viewed by entire group.

3. Select a volunteer to sit in a chair, and another to be behind the camera. Then have students **frame** the student in a shot (periodically change roles to give other students an opportunity to use the camera).

4. Practice using the tripod to **tilt** the camera (moving it up and down), and framing a **high-angle** and **low-angle** shot. Ask the students how the different shot perspectives affect how they feel (a high-angle shot looking down on a character is often used to show weakness; a low-angle shot looking up at a character is often used to instill fear in the audience). Also demonstrate a camera **pan** – moving the camera from side to side (horizontally) from a stationary position.

5. Explain that the way you frame your subject will affect how your audience feels about him, her, or it. The director uses different shots and camera movements to convey emotion and affect the way the audience thinks and feels about the subject.

EXPLANATION AND MODELING

6. Introduce different shot styles by distributing the *Shot Styles Examples* handout. Watch SHIFT Drive *Shot Style and Compositions*. Discuss different shot styles students have seen on television or in the movies (wide shot, medium shot, close-up, and extreme close-up). Consider watching a sequence from a popular movie. Pause the film periodically and have students name each type of shot. Discuss with students how many different shots they saw. Were the shots varied enough? Was there too much shot diversity? Would the film be improved by showing any different types of shots?

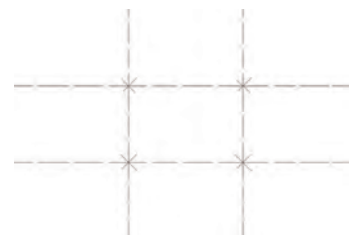
Next, re-screen *Let Them Eat Cake* and again have students name the shots as they watch. After watching a sequence, discuss how the shots are pieced together to tell a story or present important information about the story. Pause the movie on a variety of shots in order to deconstruct the shot as a class.

Brainstorm additional examples of shots used in popular media (e.g., news broadcasts are often shot with medium shots; close-ups often used to capture emotion and facial expressions during an interview, etc.). Discuss why it is important to use different types of shots.

Visual Storytelling, Shot Styles and Composition

7. Present rules of composition. Use the whiteboard to diagram basics such as dividing the frame into thirds to explain the rule of thirds.

- **Rule of thirds:** Divide the frame into nine equal parts with two vertical and two horizontal lines. Ideally you want to frame your subject at the four intersections of two of the lines, rather than right in the middle of the frame.



- **Leading looks:** Frame the shot providing space for a person to look toward, or for an object to travel or lean toward. This space should follow the direction of the subject's eyes, and it prevents the subject from looking cramped.

PRACTICE - GUIDED TO INDEPENDENT

8. Lastly, distribute blank *Shot Styles* handout to let students practice their knowledge. As students are completing this exercise, have them begin thinking about which shots they will use to tell their nine sentence stories.

Assessment:

- Student discussions
- Completion of *Shot Styles* handout

Standards:

- NCTE: 1, 2
- ISTE-S: 2, 5, 6
- CCSS:
 - Grade 4: SL1, SL2*
 - Grade 5: RL7, SL1, SL2*
 - Grade 6: W5, SL1, SL2*
 - Grade 7: W5, SL1, SL1cd, SL2*
 - Grade 8: W5, SL1, SL1cd, SL2*
- NMAS:
 - Grade 4: MA: Cr 3.1.4a,b, MA: Pr5.1.4c*
 - Grade 5: MA: Cr 3.1.5a,b, MA: Pr5.1.5c*
 - Grade 6: MA: Cr 3.1.6a,b, MA: Pr5.1.6c*
 - Grade 7: MA: Cr 3.1.7a, MA: Pr5.1.7c*
 - Grade 8: MA: Cr 3.1.8a, MA: Pr5.1.8c*



Tips and Tricks...

- Wide shots are often used at the beginning of a scene as an **establishing shot**, or to tell the audience the setting and show what the subject is doing.
- TV monitors display images differently than computer monitors and often crop images around the edges. Keep this in mind when framing a shot so that something important will not be cut off when viewed on television.



SHOT STYLES

EXAMPLES



Establishing Shot



Low Angle



Wide Shot (Long Shot)



High Angle



Medium Shot



Dutch Angle



Close-Up



Over the Shoulder



Extreme Close-Up



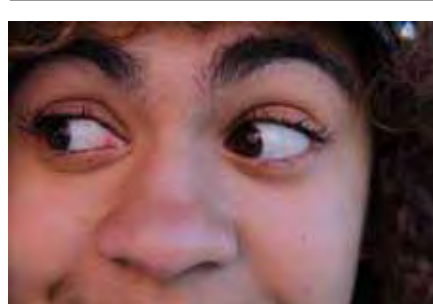
Two-Shot

SHOT STYLES



Match the shot style with the correct photograph.

- Establishing Shot
- Wide Shot (Long Shot)
- Medium Shot
- Close-Up
- Extreme Close-Up
- Low Angle
- High Angle
- Dutch Angle
- Over the Shoulder
- Two-Shot



SHOT STYLES

teacher key



Establishing Shot



High Angle



Dutch Angle



Two Shot



Over the Shoulder



Low Angle



Wide Shot (long shot)



Close-Up



Medium Shot



Extreme Close-Up

Cinematography and Storyboarding

>> ACTIVITIES

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Introduce the lesson by letting the students know that they're beginning the process of translating their nine sentence stories ideas to the screen. Distribute the students' paper project folders that now contain their completed *Nine Sentence Story* handout and divide the students back into their original groups of three or four.

2. Review different shot styles and how they might be used to tell a story. Once again, as a class, view the SHIFT Drive *Shot Styles and Composition* and distribute the *Motivation for Shots* handout to each student. In addition to further discussing when a certain shot might be appropriate, also review the rule of thirds and leading looks and talk about the different camera movement and camera angle options.

3. Watch SHIFT Drive *Storyboarding*. Share the *Nine Sentence Storyboard Sample* handout and let students know that this will become their visual representation, or their visual organizer, of their nine sentence movies. Explain to students that to prepare for a shoot, storyboards help them think visually.

Note: Before students begin storyboarding, it is important to discuss the different elements included on the Storyboard Handout. The "shot action" is not included on the Sample Storyboard Handouts, but can refer to the "action" taking place in the shot (e.g. running, walking) or the action of the camera (e.g. tilt, pan or tracking). Ask students what they would have included for the "shot action" on the Sample Storyboard.

Remind students of the finished project parameters and that they should aim to have only nine storyboard frames (ideally one storyboard per sentence), thus nine camera shots, to tell their stories.

- 30 to 60 seconds (excluding titles or end credits)
- No dialogue (this is strictly a visual story)
- Music and sound effects encouraged
- Consider props, costumes, locations, scenery, acting and lighting
- Use a variety of shot styles and diverse shot composition

EXPLANATION AND MODELING

4. Next, again show the actual *Nine Sentence Movie Samples* located on the SHIFT Drive. Discuss how well the Nine Sentence Storyboard Sample handout (Example #2) got translated to the screen. What was represented well? What turned out differently? What music type would students have included on the *Nine Sentence Storyboard Sample* handout: happy, scary, sad, etc.?

Optional: Another exciting way to present the storyboard concept is to share a popular Hollywood film and watch how a professional storyboarder's vision is translated to the big screen. A good example of this is on the *Extras* portion of the *Monsters Inc.* DVD.

PRACTICE - GUIDED TO INDEPENDENT

5. Distribute nine *Storyboard* handouts to each group and instruct the

Objectives:

Students will know/be able to...

- >> Further understand visual storytelling, composition, shot styles, and camera movement
- >> Recognize the importance of storyboards to plan shots and prepare for production

Materials:

- SHIFT Drive *Shot Styles and Composition*
- *Motivation for Shots* Handout
- SHIFT Drive *Storyboarding*
- *Nine Sentence Storyboard Samples* Handout
- *Storyboard* Handout
- SHIFT Drive *Nine Sentence Movie Samples*

Equipment:

- Media Player
- Projector



Cinematography and Storyboarding



Tips and Tricks...

Storyboards do need to be detailed, but not perfectly illustrated. Stick figures are fine, as long as they help the filmmakers visualize the different shot types.

students to use their new knowledge about shot styles and composition to begin storyboarding their nine sentence stories. Emphasize to the students that the storyboards should be completed sequentially. Every portion of the storyboard template should be completed. If a segment of the storyboard does not apply for a particular shot, have students add N/A - not applicable. Storyboards should be thorough visual road maps that any director or cinematographer could pick up to direct the shoot.

Tell the students that they should discuss their strategy and establish their vision before the storyboards are completed. In addition to thinking about how each shot will be composed within each storyboard frame, have students also think about the action that is happening in each shot (e.g., actor walks toward camera, or actor walks from left to right). Once they're prepared, have the group select their storyboard artist or have each team member try their hand at illustrating a portion of the project.

6. Have groups exchange their storyboards and require the groups to present their peers' stories. If the storyboards are unclear or sloppily completed, this obviously will be a very difficult task and will require the group to revise their storyboards.

7. As a final step, have the students turn in their storyboards for final teacher approval and grading before they're allowed to start the shooting (production) process.

Assessment:

- Group discussion
- Completed *Storyboard* handouts

Standards:

- NCTE: 4, 5, 11, 12
- ISTE-S: 4
- CCSS:
 - Grade 4: W3a, W4, W5, SL1, SL1cd*
 - Grade 5: W3a, W4, W5, SL1, SL1cd*
 - Grade 6: W3ab, W4, W5, SL1, SL1cd*
 - Grade 7: W3ab, W4, W5, SL1, SL1cd*
 - Grade 8: W3ab, W4, W5, SL1, SL1cd*
- NMAS:
 - Grade 4: MA: Pr5.1.4c*
 - Grade 5: MA: Pr5.1.5c*
 - Grade 6: MA: Pr5.1.6c*
 - Grade 7: MA: Pr5.1.7c*
 - Grade 8: MA: Pr5.1.8c*

Motivation for Shots

★ **WIDE (WS):** This shot is used when the filmmakers want the audience to understand the surroundings. We can get a sense of where the characters are and where they are located. Most scenes will open with a wide shot that gives us this knowledge. This is known as an establishing shot.

★ **MEDIUM (MS):** The audience sees less of the surrounding area, but can see more detail, such as a character's face. However, the shot is still far enough out that a portion of the character's body can be seen, allowing the audience to see any necessary hand gestures.

★ **CLOSE-UP (CU):** A close-up gives the audience much more detail as we can now get a good sense of character emotion. A close-up allows us to be closer to the character, and possibly relate to him or her more.

★ **EXTREME CLOSE-UP (XCU):** This shot gives us extreme detail of a person or an object. We sacrifice all outside perspective, but we are given an intimate understanding of the subject.

CAMERA MOVEMENTS:

★ **PAN:** Moving the camera from side to side (horizontally) from a stationary position

★ **TRACK:** Physically moving the camera horizontally as if it is sliding on track

★ **TILT:** Moving the camera up and down (vertically) from a stationary position

★ **ZOOM IN OR OUT:** Moving in or out on an object from a wide shot to a close-up or vice versa

CAMERA ANGLES:

★ **HIGH ANGLE:** Shot looking down at something or someone to create a sense of vulnerability or inferiority for the subject

★ **LOW ANGLE:** Shot in which the subject is above the camera, usually to convey a sense of the subject's importance

★ **DUTCH:** Shot in which the camera is tilted to the side so that the horizon is not parallel to the bottom of the frame

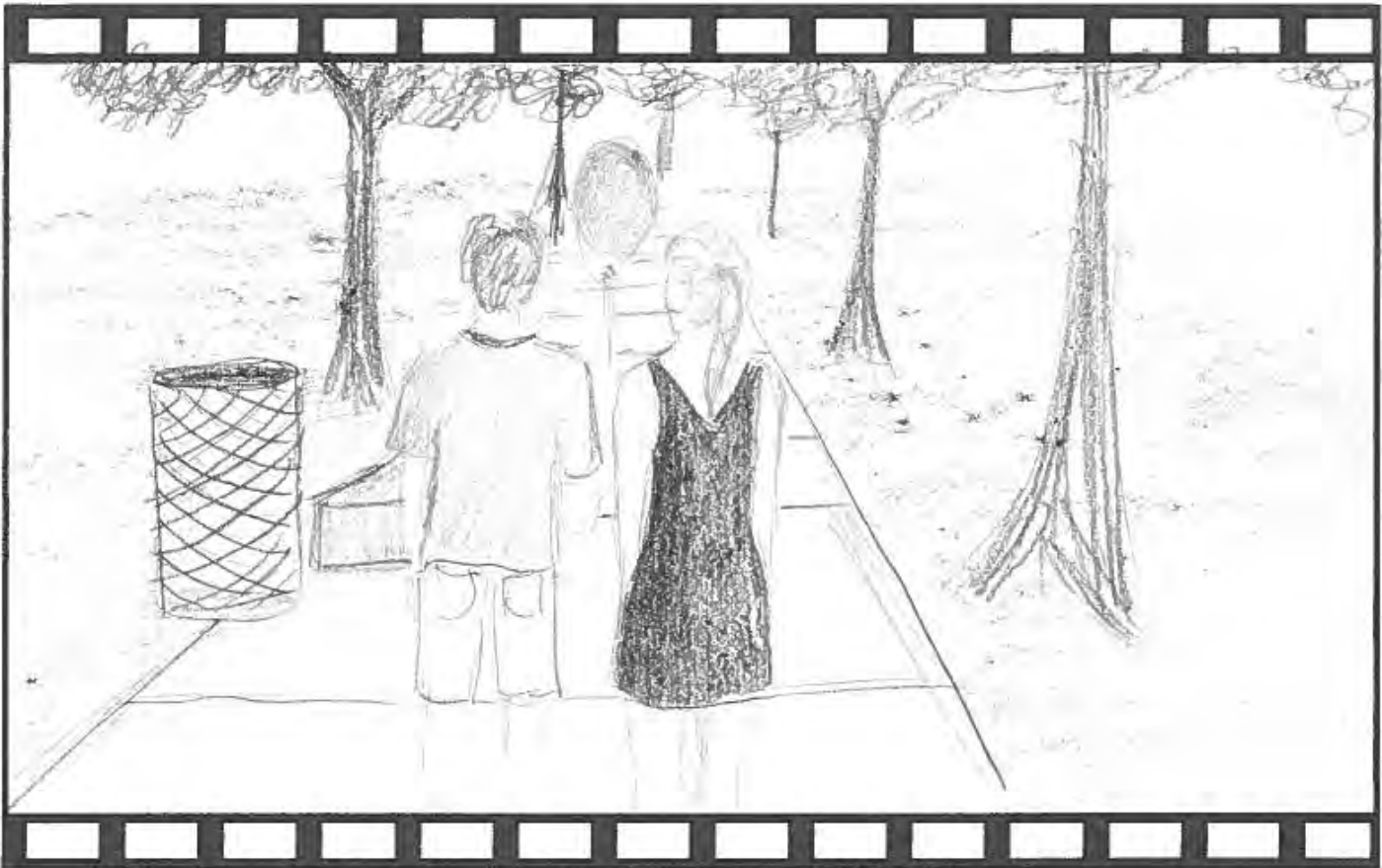


Tips and Tricks...

- Keep in mind that the size of the object in the frame has a direct relation to its importance in the scene. Only focus closely on an object that holds great relevance to your film.
- Good filmmakers will use a variety of shots to tell their story. Try using each type of shot at least once in a scene. This will help your film's pacing, add excitement to the scene, and keep the audience engaged.

Student Name(s): MARGARET KING

Movie Title: 9 SENTENCE STORY EXAMPLE 2- THE BALLOON STORYBOARD # 1 OF 8



Shot Location: EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Audio:

Shot Style: Establishing Shot

Music _____

Video Still Image

Sound Effects _____

Props / Wardrobe: BALLOON, BOX

Dialogue / Voiceover Narration / Text (circle all that apply)

None
