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The most UNUSUAL
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ever filmed!!!

THE
STRANGERS

THE
HONEYMOONERS

CINEMATIC DEVICES GUIDE
Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*



MISS
LONELYHEARTS

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S
MOTION PICTURE SUSPENSE CLASSIC... STARRING
JAMES STEWART
"REAR WINDOW"
Co-starring
GRACE KELLY · WENDELL COREY · THELMA RITTER

TECHNICOLOR®



The Princess—in her
most striking performance!

with RAYMOND BURR
TV's Perry Mason



Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK · Screenplay by JOHN MICHAEL HAYES

A Paramount Re-Release



Look out for the following (and consider how they help shape meaning in the film)

Camera shots

Long shots: Contain landscape but gives the viewer a more specific idea of setting

E.g.



Close-up/(extreme close-up)*: Contains just one character's face. Enables viewers to understand the actor's emotions and also allows them to feel empathy for the character. In *Rear Window*, the close-ups are used to help create the Kuleshov Effect.

E.g.



Mid-shot: Contains the characters from the waist up, allows audience to see the characters' faces more clearly as well as their interaction with others. Gives insight into relationship.

E.g.



Panning/sweeping shot*: One of the simplest and most common movements is to turn, or pan (from the word *panorama*), the camera horizontally so that it sweeps around the scene. This is used throughout *Rear Window*, especially during Hitchcock's shots of the neighbourhood. Often combined with dollying/tracking.

POV shots*: A short film scene that shows what a character (the subject) is looking at. POV shots, from Jeff's perspective, are used throughout *Rear Window*.

E.g.



Camera angles

High angle: Angle that looks directly down upon a scene. Often helps to establish setting

Low angle: Angle that looks directly up on a scene.

Eye-level angle: Puts the audience on equal footing with the characters. Most commonly used angle.

Mise en Scene

“**Mise en scene**” refers to all the objects and characters in a particular frame. More specifically, it refers to the composition of the frame. When you use the term mise en scene, you are discussing where the composer or director has placed all the elements of the scene within the frame.

Consider the composition of this shot:



Lighting:

Lighting is a very important aspect for shaping meaning in films.

Consider the lighting in this scene:



Consider this analysis of Hitchcock's use of lighting in *Rear Window*:

In *Rear Window* (1954), lighting is used again to convey deeper meaning to the audience, but this time in a very literal sense. Lighting is used to represent knowing: when the people in neighboring apartments have their lights on and shades open, the audience and Jefferies are able to see them and what they are doing. When they have their lights off or are in silhouette, Jefferies, as well as the audience, cannot know. Here, Hitchcock is using light in an incredibly simple and literal way, yet the film would certainly suffer without it: this idea of knowing versus unknowing would still be present within the diegesis, but the visual representation makes this theme much clearer to the audience and gives them a better understanding of what the characters in the film are feeling and experiencing.

Sound, Soundtrack and Music

Soundtrack: The soundtrack of the film can help to add further insight into the characters and themes.

Consider this discussion of *Rear Window*'s soundtrack:

<https://irom.wordpress.com/2017/01/17/lisa-and-the-music-in-hitchcocks-rear-window/>

Diegetic Sound: is noise or audio coming from inside the frame of the film and include; voices of characters, noises from objects, music coming from the scene etc.

E.g. the noise of the cars/children playing in Jeff's neighbourhood.

Non-diegetic sound: is noise or audio coming from 'outside' the frame, it might be manufactured or a recording that has been placed over the vision. eg, voice-over, soundtrack, sound effects. Note: diegetic sound can become non-diegetic sound and vice versa.

*Note: non-diegetic sound is rarely used in *Rear Window* – why might this be?*

“The muffled sounds of the neighbors' suffering - the Thorwalds' fights, Miss Lonelyhearts's tears - are often conjoined to the sounds of nearby celebrations or to the quotidian sounds of children playing or a drain pipe leaking. *Rear Window*'s soundtrack represents an interplay of the tragic and the mundane.” - [Hitchcock's *Rear Window*: The Well Made Film by John Fawell](#)

“Hitchcock varies extension in *Rear Window*. Sometimes he let us hear the big city thrumming outside the apartment. At other times he eliminates the larger cityscape entirely. At the very end of the film, the extension becomes extremely narrow, focusing on a single point, like a lone spotlight pursuing a character on a stage - the footsteps of a killer in the stairway, which Stewart can hear approaching.” - [FilmSound.org](#)

Editing

Sequence: is an editing technique to allow for a flashback or dream sequence. This usually involves a break in the linear narrative and provide important character development.

Kuleshov Effect: is a film editing (montage) effect by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation. It is used significantly in *Rear Window*.

Watch this video which explores the Kuleshov Effect:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNVf1N34-io>

Cuts: an abrupt transition from one shot to another.

E.g.



Fade in/out: the transition to and from a blank image. In *Rear Window*, fades are used to signal the passing of time.

Resources

Videos

Exploring Hitchcock's techniques: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4Yw8hz3tG8>

Explanation of Kuleshov Effect: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy2Vhnqtu8I>

Analysis of opening and closing scenes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afippBDe-0>

Symmetry in *Rear Window*: <https://vimeo.com/128184288>

Film techniques in *Rear Window*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaFOjeUBSnk>

Film techniques: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvybQ5RpMkc>

Interview with Alfred Hitchcock: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDvC6tzrJro>

Articles

"The Hitchcock Touch": Visual Techniques in the Work of Alfred Hitchcock, by Paige A. Driscoll: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=irj>

"The Kuleshov Effect: Recreating the Classic Experiment," by Stephen Prince and Wayne E. Hensley (available on STL Link: VCE English Learning Page)

Websites

Editing in *Rear Window*: <https://nofilmschool.com/2014/07/alfred-hitchcock-editing-rear-window-kuleshov-effect>

Film techniques: <https://nofilmschool.com/2017/03/how-alfred-hitchcock-turns-you-voyeur-rear-window>

Voyeurism and film techniques: <https://cinephiliabeyond.org/rear-window-hitchcocks-cinematic-exploration-voyeurism-disguised-top-notch-thriller/>

Limited perspective of the voyeur: <https://the-artifice.com/hitchcock-rear-window-1954-voyeur/>

Building suspense: <https://lcc2500summer2011.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/building-suspense-in-rear-window/>

Film questions: Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Answer the following questions in detail.

Day 1: 00:00 – 36:44

Question 1: The film begins with a shot of Jeff's window as the blinds slowly rise in a theatrical manner. What do you think is the significance of this shot?

Question 2: *Rear Window* is famous for using only diegetic sounds (excepting the credits and first musical piece). Why might Hitchcock have avoided non-diegetic sounds?

Question 3: Our first introduction to Jeff focuses on his broken leg. What is the significance of the writing on his cast?



Question 4: Throughout the film, there are recurring references to the heat. As the film progresses, the temperature drops. How might this be symbolic?

Question 5: Following the first shot of Jeff, the camera pans across Jeff's apartment. What do you notice about his apartment? What impression does this give you of Jeff?

Question 6: What are your first impressions of Jeff, following his conversation with Gunnison? List five words to describe him.

Question 7: Stella acts as a 'voice of reason' in these early scenes of the film. List some of her most important quotes. What is her view on Jeff's behaviour at this point?

Question 8: How does Hitchcock use foreshadowing in the opening scenes of the film?

Question 9: Throughout the film, POV shots are used. What is the impact of this?

Question 10: Jeff discusses marriage with both Stella and Gunnison, his boss. What are his views on marriage? What opposing views are raised by Stella and Gunnison?

Question 11: Interestingly, Jeff's neighbours offer many different portrayals and incarnations of marriage/relationships. What portrayals are presented?



Question 12: What is your first impression of Lisa? List five words to describe her.

Question 13: Lisa and Jeff's relationship is one of the key focuses of this film. Discuss how it is presented during their first interactions.

Question 14: To chart the progress of Lisa and Jeff's relationship, Hitchcock uses music. Specifically, in each of their meetings, Jeff's neighbour – the composer – works on a piece of music that we eventually (final scenes) discover is called "Lisa." During their first interaction, the piece is incomplete and a 'work-in-progress.' How is this symbolic? How do their opposing reactions to the music demonstrate the tension in their relationship?

Lisa
Jeff

I think it's enchanting... Almost as if it were being written for us.
No wonder he's having so much trouble with it.



Question 15: Briefly summarise the nocturnal activities of the salesman that intrigue Jeff.

Question 16: How is lighting used by Hitchcock to build suspense?

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Day 2: 36:44 – 50:29

Question 1: Although Stella recriminates Jeff for his voyeuristic behaviours, she too becomes enthralled in his neighbour's lives. This is significant for two reasons: 1) how is her interest different to Jeff's? 2) what does this allow Hitchcock to suggest about voyeurism?

Question 2: Jeff gives many of his neighbours nicknames: Miss Torso, Miss Lonelyhearts. What does this suggest about both society at the time and Jeff as a character?

Question 3: As Stella leaves, Jeff asks for his binoculars before moving to spy on his neighbours with a camera. Why is this significant? How does Hitchcock use cinematic devices to show this is a progression in Jeff's voyeuristic behaviours?

Question 4: When Lisa visits Jeff again that evening, he is distracted by his neighbours. What does this suggest about Jeff? What does this suggest about Jeff and Lisa's relationship?

Question 5: Lisa, like Stella, disapproves of Jeff's behaviour at this point. What concerns does she raise? What changes her mind?

Question 6: Lisa begins to help Jeff investigate Mrs Thorwald's disappearance. How is this a turning point?

Question 7: How does Lisa and Jeff's changing relationship intertwine with the unfolding murder mystery?



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Day 3: 50:29 – 1:25:10

Question 1: What doubts does Doyle raise about Jeff's suspicions during his interactions with Jeff?

Question 2: Jeff's reaction to the newlyweds' apartment – shades down, wife calling her husband back to bed – provides a good example of the Kuleshov Effect. What is Jeff's reaction to the newlyweds?

Question 3: Why do you think Jeff is so concerned about his neighbours?

Question 4: Why does Lisa now believe Mrs Thorwald was murdered? What is Jeff's reaction to Lisa's interest in the case?

Question 5: How does Lisa attempt to prove to Jeff that she is adaptable?



Question 6: When Doyle returns to Jeff's apartment to provide further evidence the murder did not occur, he embodies the sexist attitudes of the time in his interactions with Lisa. How so?

Question 7: At one point, Doyle suggests that Jeff is being hypocritical as he also doesn't "tell [his] landlord everything." Is Jeff a hypocrite? How so?

Question 8: What event prompts Lisa and Jeff to examine the ethics of their behaviour? What do they realise about themselves?

Question 9: One of Jeff's neighbours rants about the state of their small community after her dog is killed. What does she say? Is she correct?

Question 10: What reaffirms Jeff's belief that Thorwald killed his wife?

*

Day 4: 1:25:10 – End

Question 1: Lisa and Stella act as Jeff's 'legs' in their investigations of Thorwald. How has Lisa changed? What is Jeff's reaction to these changes?

Question 2: How does Hitchcock use cinematic devices to reveal Jeff's vulnerability and immobility during Lisa's confrontation with Thorwald?



Question 3: As Lisa sneaks into Thorwald's apartment, Miss Lonelyhearts appears to be readying herself to commit suicide. How do Stella and Jeff react to this? What does this reveal about them as individuals?

Question 4: What comment does Hitchcock make about movie-watching itself?

Question 5: Briefly outline what occurs in the final scenes of the film.

Question 6: In the final scenes of the film, how does Hitchcock build suspense?

Question 7: What do you think is the most significant moment? Why?

Question 8: How has Jeff changed? How does Hitchcock use symmetry to demonstrate this?

Question 9: How has Lisa changed? What props/clothing does Hitchcock use to demonstrate this?

Question 10: Recount the resolutions of each of the neighbours – Miss Lonelyhearts, Miss Torso, the dog owners, the Newlyweds, the Thorwalds and the composer.

Question 11: What do you think is the ultimate message of the director?



Analytical text response topics

1. '*Rear Window* ultimately depicts women as dependent on men.' Discuss.
2. 'The film leaves the audience with the conviction that there are many ways of looking at and understanding the world.' To what extent do you agree?
3. How does *Rear Window* force its audience to question the values and roles expected of the characters by their society?
4. "We're a nation of Peeping Toms." To what extent does Hitchcock endorse this idea in *Rear Window*?
5. To what extent can *Rear Window* be seen as representing American society in the early 1950s?
6. To what extent does *Rear Window* offer the audience a Hollywood happy ending?
7. To what extent do the female characters of the film both criticise the values of their world, yet also act as guides for the male characters?
8. 'The film *Rear Window* is much more about the relationships between men and women than it is about solving a crime.' Discuss.
9. To what extent does the whole film revolve around marriage?
10. How does *Rear Window* suggest that relationships between men and women are not always easy?
11. How does Hitchcock suggest that there is a strong connection between our private and our public lives?