

Mise-en-Scène

What is Mise-en-Scène?

- A French term meaning what is put into a scene or frame
- Visual information in front of the camera
- Communicates essential information to the audience
- made up of various elements

Elements of Mise-en-Scène?

1. Settings & Props
2. Costume, Hair & Make Up
3. Facial Expressions & Body Language
4. Lighting and Colour
5. Positioning of characters/objects within the frame

The following research activities will help familiarise you with the concept and develop image interpretational and analytical skills.

Consider the questions below to provide a framework for your blog and a brief summary of what you have learnt.

Research Activity 1

Can you describe how the elements of Mise-en-Scène in the following scene?

Watch the following scene

- *Snow White* (Disney Studios, 1937)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB7O_JlxGuY

1. Settings & Props

The first scene is set in an underground, basement or dungeon-like room, while the second one takes place in a house in a bright forest. The key props include:

- the poisoned apple
- The cauldron filled with green, thick poisonous substance
- The raven
- The apple basket

2. Costume, Hair & Make Up

The witch is wearing a black cloak with a hood on her head. Her movements are angular and jerky, contrasting with Snow White's subtle, graceful gestures. The protagonist is wearing her famous blue, red and cream/yellow dress, as well as a red bow in her hair.

3. Facial Expressions & Body Language

The Witch has manic, wide open eyes and a crooked smile, which suggest her satisfaction and evil plans. Snow White, on the other hand, has a very vulnerable body posture and facial expression, showing her openness and innocence.

4. Lighting and Colour

The lighting is high-key, very dramatic. The viewer can see a lot of dramatic, exaggerated shadows, especially in the scene where the Witch is creating the poisoned apple. There, the color palette is very dark, full of greens, purples, and blacks, hues associated with poison and evil. The glossy, saturated red of the apple stands out from the rest of the environment, suggesting its importance in the plot line. The second, outdoor scene is dominated with light, warm pastel colors - greens, blues, creams and yellows. This also makes the apple stand out.

5. Positioning of characters/objects within the frame

Positions of characters and objects within these frames are changing quite dynamically. During the creation of the apple, the Witch is often framed by the cauldron or shadow. To emphasize the importance of the apple, the moment of its creation features a close-up shot. When she hands the fruit to Snow White, the framing tightens—a close-up on the apple between their hands—turning it into a powerful symbolic object of temptation.

6. What role does the shot choice (Cinematography) play in the scene.

The cinematography uses dramatic angles, close-ups, and lighting to heighten tension and contrast good versus evil. Low angles and shadowy lighting make the Witch appear menacing and powerful, while soft, balanced light around Snow White emphasizes her innocence. The close-up of the glowing red apple draws focus to its danger and temptation, turning a simple object into a powerful symbol of deceit and fate.

Research Activity 2



Anomalisa. Charlie Kaufman 2016

Can you describe the mise-en-scene in this picture? How are the characters placed in the frame?

The scene takes place in a bedroom. We can see a very minimalistic use of props in this setting, as the only clearly visible objects are the bed, two bedside tables and slippers.

The color palette of the scene's environment is very simple, almost monochromatic - we can only notice shades of brown and beige/ This creates quite a dull and monotonous atmosphere.

The man's clothing match the environment's palette very well, as he is dressed in different shades of brown and a light gray shirt. The woman's outfit, on the other hand, stands out more. She is wearing a pink jumper and a blue skirt, injecting life into the frame. Both of the characters are wearing very ordinary, day-to-day clothing.

The characters are placed in the center of this high-angle, long shot. The frame is very flat as there is almost no visible depth. It is a symmetrical framing, disrupted only by the slippers.

The characters' facial expressions suggest loneliness, sadness or tiredness, which affect the scene's overall mood and results in a depressing atmosphere. The lighting is lowkey, very soft and diffused.

Research Activity 3

Watch this scene from *Rebecca*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h23zAV2Wnps>
(36mins into the film)

Rebecca (Hitchcock. 1940)

Can you describe the relationship between the characters?

There is a visible power imbalance between the two characters in the scene. Mrs Danvers holds more psychological power, she is intimidating, and her presence results in the other woman's nervousness, tension and insecurity. It's clearly visible that the characters are in no way close with each other. It is a hierarchical relationship.

How do we know what the relationship is?

We can determine the relationship by observing the dialogue, behavior, facial expressions and body language of the characters. Mrs. Danvers' deliberate, silent movements contrast with the young woman's nervous, fidgety responses.

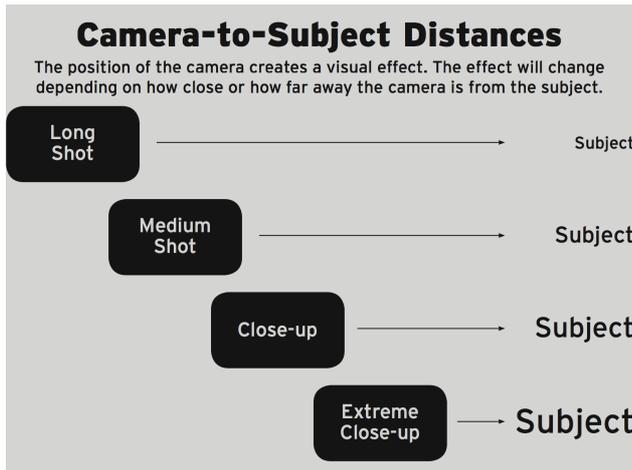
Can you describe how the mise-en-scene works together to tell us what the relationship is?

The conversation takes place in a room that feels formal and cold, emphasizing the young woman's smallness and vulnerability. The authority and emotional coldness of Mrs. Danvers is reinforced by her dark clothing, and the fact that she is the only character standing in the scene. She has a very expressionless face and looks down on the other woman. Her posture visibly dominates the space.

High Key Lighting

Low Key Lighting

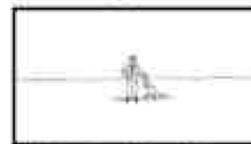
Natural Lighting



Extreme Long Shot : XLS / ELS



Medium Shot : MS



Very Long Shot : VLS



Medium Close-Up : MCU



Long Shot : LS



Close-Up : CU



Medium Long Shot : MLS



Big Close-Up : BCU



Extreme Close-Up : XCU / ECU

Low Angle Shot

Signifier (shot)	Definition	Signified
close-up	face only	intimacy
medium shot	most of the body	personal relationship
long shot	setting & characters	context, scope, public distance
full shot	full body of person	social relationship
pan down	camera looks down	power, authority
pan up	camera looks up	smallness, weakness
zoom in	camera moves in	observation, focus
fade in	image appears on blank screen	beginning
fade out	image screen goes blank	ending
cut	switch from one image to another	simultaneity, excitement
wipe	image wiped off screen	imposed

Can you describe the mise-en-scene in this picture?

What type of shot is it?

This is a medium close-up shot.

What is the camera angle?

This is an eye-level, straight camera angle.

Where is the character located in the frame?

The girl is placed in the center of the frame, which establishes her as the emotional focus.

What is she wearing?

The girl is dressed very modestly, wearing a muted, olive green, long-sleeve dress or a blouse, a brown cross-shoulder bag and a red headscarf, which is the most attention-grabbing element of the frame.

What is the depth-of-field?

The depth of this frame is very subtle - the background characters slightly fade into the background buildings. However, they are not being blurred, but they become less visible as the color palette of their clothing starts to resemble the architecture behind them.

Describe the colour palette?

The scene has a very toned down, earthy color palette. It is dominated by various hues of browns and muted greens. It is desaturated and low in contrast, resulting in a sad, melancholic atmosphere. The only outstanding element is the girl's headscarf, which successfully draws the viewers attention right to her.

Describe the lighting?

The lighting in this scene is natural.

