

Glossary of Film Terms

Excerpted and adapted from *Reading in the Dark*, John Golden; *Reel Conversations*, Alan Teasley, Ann Wilder; *Looking at Movies*, Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan; *Shakespeare and Film*, Samuel Crowl; *Great Films and How to Teach Them*, William Costanzo; *Anatomy of Film*, Bernard F. Dick; *Shakespeare on Film*, Carolyn Jess-Cooke; *Reading Shakespeare Film First*, Mary Ellen Dakin.

CAMERA SHOTS

Long shot: A shot taken from some distance; shows the full subject and perhaps the surrounding scene as well. An **aerial shot** is filmed from a crane or an aircraft.

Extreme Long shot: Taken from a great distance with a wide view. The subject may be too small to be recognized. An ELS is called an **establishing shot** when it defines the location.

Medium shot: In-between LS and CS; people are seen from the waist up.

Close-up: A single image takes up most of the screen; for example, an actor's face.

Extreme Close-up: A very close shot of a small detail that fills a screen; for example, an eye.

CAMERA ANGLES

Low angle: Camera is below the subject; usually has the effect of making the subject look larger than normal.

High angle: Camera is above the subject; usually has the effect of making the subject look smaller than normal.

Eye level: Accounts for 90 to 95 percent of the shots seen because it is most natural; camera is even with the key character's eyes.

Overhead: The camera looks down on the subject from a fixed location directly above.

CAMERA MOVEMENT

Pan: The horizontal movement left or right of a stationary camera mounted on a tripod.

Tilt: The vertical movement up or down of a stationary camera mounted on a tripod.

Dolly: The camera is moving with the action – on a track, on wheels, or held by hand.

Zoom: The camera is stationary but the lens shifts, making the image appear to grow larger or smaller. A **slam zoom** is shot at high speed.

Handheld: Small portable cameras that produce the shaky images associated with news footage.

EDITING

The most common is a **Cut** to another image. Others are:

Fade: Scene fades to black or white; often implies that time has passed.

Dissolve: An image fades into another; can create a connection between images.

Wipe: A line moves across the screen, literally wiping one shot and replacing it with another.

Crosscut: Cutting to different action that is happening simultaneously; also called **parallel editing**.

SOUND

Vocal: Dialogue (ordinary speech or theatrical), on-screen narration, and on- or off-screen voices (vocal sound produced by a large group of people). A **voice-over** (V/O) is off-camera narration by a character who is not in the scene, a narrator who is not a character, or a commentator.

Environmental: Background sounds and noise that are natural to the setting and the action, though they may be produced artificially as **sound effects** to intensify the impact.

Music: Can be any combination of classical or modern, and played by characters and objects in the film or by off-screen musicians, bands, and orchestras. Music contributes to the tone, mood, and themes of a film and can contribute to characterization.

Silence: the absence of sound, which can have an unsettling effect on the audience. Silence in a film reinforces the importance of images.