



## **Cultivating a Growth Mindset through Film Studies**

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“Only desire truly initiates learning.” -Serge Daney

### **Introduction: Film as an Art Form**

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There has been endless debate whether film should be perceived as an art form. Rudolf Arnheim has certainly posed this debate in his book titled “Film as Art” where he states that

There are still many educated people who stoutly deny the possibility that film might be art. They say in effect: “Film cannot be art, for it does nothing but reproduce reality mechanically.” Those who defend this point of view are reasoning from the analogy of painting. (Arnheim, 1957, p. 8)

To an extent, this is correct. The reality of the subject takes form through the painter’s eyes, and they use their hands to create the artwork. Yet, people need to consider the basic elements of filming techniques that directors utilize purposefully to captivate their audience through a series of moving pictures. It takes artistic elements to make a successful film and it is a matter of considerable sensibility. According to Arnheim,

People who contemptuously refer to the camera as an automatic recording machine must be made to realize that even in the photographic reproduction of a simple object, a feeling for its nature is required which is quite beyond any mechanical operation.

Directors, just like other artists, often make choices deliberately for the sake of achieving specific effects. For instance, their reduction of depth, choice in light and color, the limitations of the image and distance from the object, as well as absence on the space-time continuum are all dominant factors. According to Arnheim’s aesthetic, which is a dominant way of thinking about the medium, in a good film, every moment captured should contribute to the actions. Moreover, it is imperative for the viewers’ attention to be guided so they may understand this work of art. That is how viewers submerge themselves into the film and ultimately feel what

the director desires them to feel.

## Significance of Studying Film

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Film, if utilized with purpose, can be an effective way to teach specific content in a classroom. Analyzing films can help students experience the content in a personal and intimate way; appreciating its overall composition even more. Alain Bergala, the author of *The Cinema Hypothesis*, explains the significance of film education in schools and expresses that film is not just for communication and pure entertainment. He explains that the “artistic qualities of film is in every way comparable to that of painting and music.” (Bergala, 2016, p.121) Through film, educators can share an engaging experience of the creative practice with their class, and unfold the mysteries of a director’s artistic choices. It can also transpire as an eye-opening motive for students to take their own creative approaches in a similar manner. They can become familiar with all of the choices, the risks, and emotions that arise in the process. According to Bergala, experiencing creation is “essential and indispensable.” It is fundamentally valuable in the real world.

Various styles of analyzing film can enrich academic practices within the classroom. There is *Semiotic Analysis* that is the study of meaning behind signs and symbols, typically involving metaphors, analogies, and symbolism. There is also *Narrative structure Analysis*, the analysis of the story elements, which include the plot structure, character development, and theme. This is very similar to the dramatic structure of literature (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) which could be ideal for literature connections. Moreover, there is *Cultural Context Analysis* which is analysis of the film as part of a broader context. This takes into consideration the culture, time, and place of the film’s creation. This blends into historical context. Lastly, there is *Mise-en-scène Analysis*, the study of the arrangement of compositional elements in film. Essentially, it is the analysis of audiovisual elements that most distinctly separates film analysis from literary analysis. This is meaningful because film incorporates audiovisual elements that must be coordinated; that coordination amounts to a new dimension available for analysis. Not to say that one form of analysis surpasses the others, but for this particular unit, I will primarily be concentrating on *Mise-en-scène*.

*Mise-en-scène* comprises visual elements, which include (but are not limited to): props and costumes, setting, lighting, camera angles, frames, choreography, music, color values, depth, placement of characters, etc. Because this will be most likely their first introduction to film/video analysis in a 10-week timeframe, we will be mainly studying the following elements that theoretically stage mood: music (given), lighting, camera angles, colors values, movements, and pace. We will view a couple of music video in their entirety, and generate screen captures (still images) of certain scenes that can help with detailed analysis of color, light, placement of objects, etc. My objective is for students to look further beyond logic and narrative, and understand the detailed composition that the directors chose to establish mood and imagery. Throughout this unit, I would like to encourage a more conscious approach to analyzing audiovisual texts by breaking down elements into smaller, more digestible pieces. My pedagogy is based on observation and exploration, which enhances students’ thinking and their own creative practice.

## Rationale

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In my six years of teaching elementary on the South side of Chicago, I consistently try and stay informed about our school and neighborhood to understand the domains that may affect and influence the planning of my units/lessons. I know that, of 592 students currently attending Seward, 98% are Hispanic and 100% come from low-income families. Unfortunately, the neighborhood itself is not considered the safest due to its high crime rate and gang activity. In a CPS survey where students were asked if they felt safe traveling to school as well as in and around the building, the school ranks "weak." This has greatly impacted attendance and academic performance. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated this outcome. Our school's test scores fell far below the state average. The percent of proficiency in reading currently stands at 13% and proficiency in math stands at 10%. There is no doubt that there are many other factors that affect this outcome, but I try my best to develop units that support our students academically by incorporating subjects that pique their interest and motivation since motivation can overcome many types of handicaps. To reiterate, my center focus for this unit is to increase their critical thinking skills through observation and creativity. Critical thinking is, undeniably, an essential skill through which students can actively conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. More importantly, this can be transferable to other disciplines as well as real-world matters.

## Classroom Context

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I have chosen to complete this unit for our 8th-grade students in preparation for high school. I am hoping that this unit will inspire them at the beginning of their last school year with us, and stimulate vital thinking skills that they can utilize in other classes. I will be teaching students at a variety of academic levels, and I will need to establish a creative approach to engage them all in the process. Therefore, I will try to target the following learning styles throughout the entire 10-week unit: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. The topic will primarily revolve around music videos and the moods conveyed. This is because the film is an outgrowth of other arts such as photography. However, for the purpose of time and easier analysis, we will be focusing on music videos rather than cinematic films. This, I believe, will intrigue the 8th-grade students because they are part of Generation Z- the most technology-driven generation of all with high attraction to their mobile phones. Gen Z are known to prefer watching very short (one minute or less) videos via social media means such as TikTok. Moreover, in my upper-grade classes, students asked permission to listen to music as they complete their projects during "studio time" and I highly encourage it. It helps increase focus during their art-making process and enhances their disposition. I am firm believer that, during their creating stage, music can increase endurance and even inspire them to make confident moves in the process. This is why I found the study of music videos to be appropriate for this group. Furthermore, we will specifically be analyzing mood within music videos, and discuss how the directors accomplish this through their choices in aesthetics. Just like a painter or photographer, the director integrates their perception of art in an audiovisual to make their audience feel a certain way, and that is what I would like my students to understand.

I will begin this unit by summarizing prior knowledge and skills. From their previous years in art, my students have come familiar with elements and principles of design, which is significant component in the composition

of films. They are also very aware that tone and colors can drive mood, and mood is the atmosphere in a painting, or the feeling expressed. It tells us if it is tranquil, or dark and disturbing. In addition, tone refers to the lightness or darkness of colors used, which can help to create a sense of depth or distance in art. More importantly, artists use light and dark colors to convey a mood or an emotion. Essentially, the mood is what you feel when consuming a piece of art. Filmmakers/directors accomplish this in a similar fashion for their audience.

## Why Music Videos?

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Essentially, music videos themselves are really just short films. In his book, *Money For Nothing: A History of the Music Video from the Beatles to the White Stripes* (2007), Saul Austerlitz emphasizes how music videos hold a significant place in the film industry and states,

The history of the music video is that of an underappreciated, critically unnoticed subgenre of filmmaking. It l uncatalogued depths, though, contain a panoply of the brilliant, fascinating, and simply odd, shedding enormous light on pop music, mythmaking, and the enduring limitless possibility of the music video as short film, liberated from the featured-length narrative's requirements to proceed in logical order, follow an easily gleaned plot, etc. (Austerlitz, 2007, p.5)

Because they have not always been viewed as such, it is important to recognize that music videos have come a long way and have unquestionably changed over time. From the start, the concept of bringing sound and image together musically was purely experimental. In his quest, Austerlitz discovers that one of the very first was set in 1928 where Al Jolson performed *The Jazz Singer*. For the film industry, this musical format was only made to demonstrate the quality of technology and to capture the tonal distinction of songs. Subsequently, Hollywood musicals extended the idea further through animation and music exploring its capabilities. One of the most unique and influential German filmmakers during that time was Oskar Fischinger. Fischinger tightly synchronized his films' movement with music. Through his career, he collaborated with composer, Leopold Stokowski and animator, Walt Disney. Some of his composed work can be found in the final version of *Fantasia* (1940). Austerlitz states that *Fantasia* was "an avatar for the coming music video genre." He strongly believes this led films to create a visual world that that complemented musical selections, and more importantly, it foreshadowed the format of music video channels to come.

Scopitones, short-form music clips, were the next innovation of music videos in the 1950s. They primarily represented and addressed parties of young people at play. This responded to the growing teenage rebelliousness of that time, and it set the foundation for Youth-culture films such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956). Austerlitz explains that this "marked rock n' roll's newly central place at the nexus of youthful energy, musical innovation, and antiauthoritarian impulse." These films, along with others like them, implied that the performances themselves such as dancing were part of the narrative. It became the most entertaining aspect of the films.

In the 1960s, music videos were intended to "sell" the music; to quickly cash-in on instant success. The Beatles, considered the innovators of this movement, were the first to broadcast their *A Hard Day's Night* music on television in 1964. This was a way to promote their record releases without having to make in-person appearances. It was without a doubt, a successful approach. Nevertheless, Richard Lester, the American

film director behind the Beatles' promotional idea, was the main "precursor"-turning it into a unique musical comedy film by cleverly moving the camera from background to foreground and back again to flow successfully with the music. Following this guide, D.A. Pennebaker directed Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues* (1967) in a similar fashion, but adds a slight dramatic feel. According to Austerlitz,

If Lester's Beatles videos would come to define the highest early realization of music video's capacity to charm and salesmanship, *Subterranean Homesick Blues* is its Avant-grade counterpart, unabashedly intellectual and cool where *A Hard Day's Night* was physical and warm.

As time progressed, music video directors began to take a creative stands and used this as an opportunity to construct an artistic atmosphere, above all- a mood and space where their viewers can fall into alongside the music itself. The goal was to keep viewers coming back for more, and increase video demand. Austerlitz explains that this was the purpose behind the business model of MTV as well as its other companions that followed in the 1980s. In addition, music videos were also divided into two main categories: performance videos and concept videos. Performance videos, more traditional, were simply the musician/artist performing their song, and this often done in a performance space, a concert setting, or another relatable locale. On the other hand, the concept videos, explained by Austerlitz, "spices up the song with an accompanying visual track, on that tells a story or emphasizes a mood." Hence the reason behind my selection for this unit.

A good music video can add layers of meaning on top of a song through visual elaboration. If I can get my students to analyze this, they would be implementing a whole host of language and creative thinking skills, while enjoying it in the process. There is no doubt that it is the younger generation that generally loves music: it speaks to them, helps them make sense of their world and has the potential to evoke emotions and feelings. Music videos are also dependent on elements of *Mise-en-scène* laid out via fast cuts and editing (tied to the music's rhythm), and including camera angles, purposeful color choices, and distinct lighting to set its tone.

## Music Videos to Consider

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As mentioned by Austerlitz, MTV essentially established its own subculture and own concept of artistry, and many feature filmmakers embraced the possibilities that can come from making music videos. He stated,

Throughout the 1980s, the music video was a hotspot for experimentation and innovation, with directors like Godley, and Crème, Russell Mulcahy, Steve Barron, Jean Baptiste, Mondino, and Danny Kleinman breaking out as exemplary short-filmmakers.

The works of these directors I am sure are worth viewing and analyzing for the appreciation of this art form. However, Austerlitz proclaims that it was not until the early 90s that the idea of director as "auteur" truly influenced music videos, and he points out two directors that dominated the form like no other had done before: Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze. These directors both playfully experimented with the genre conventions of music videos, shaping trends, and delivering self-aware shots that rewarded multiple viewings; this commenced the new movement in making videos as an art form. They are both pop-culture savvy, and explore the aesthetics of modernism which is ideal for the grade level I will be teaching. In addition to these directors, I have chosen to study the artistic approaches of director Nuno Gomes. I will be presenting music videos from each of these directors to introduce the notion of music videos as an art form to my students

while meticulously uncovering them by means of *mise-en-scene* analysis.

(Note: Selecting music videos that interest both the teacher as well as the class is crucial in order to keep the energy going and drive the unit effectively)

### **Michel Gondry**

Gondry is a French filmmaker who made his way to the world of music video in an unexpected manner. He was an art school graduate who was simply directing his band's videos out of pure amusement. Two of his most well-known French videos include Jean- Francois Coen's "La Tour de Pise (1993) and IAM'S "Je Danse Le Mie" (1993). Both demonstrated Gondry's technical mastery and charismatic wit that consisted of playfulness and spontaneity. He is director that always welcomed challenging projects beyond his capabilities and finds it enjoyable to make the impossible possible. Subsequently, these French videos attracted the attention of Icelandic singer, Björk. They worked together in several music videos where Gondry had the opportunity to tinker with reality at different and distinctive levels. Some of these include "Human Behavior" (1993), "Army of Me" (1995), and "Bachelorette" (1997). These videos tested the limitations of fantasy over logic and narrative. They are definitely brilliant and worth viewing. I admired Gondry's imagination in these videos. Nevertheless, the music video that piqued my interest as fan is the Foo Fighters' video "Everlong" (1997).

In "Everlong," Gondry dabbles with concept of irrationality in dreaming. He portrays a dark sense of humor in an exploration of a dream-like state that I am sure students would appreciate. The video begins in black and white, with two scary-looking individuals lurking from the bushes of a suburban neighborhood. The camera then starts to guide the viewer into a home and creeps up a stairway into a bedroom where a couple is sleeping (played by lead singer, Dave Grohl and drummer Taylor Hawkins). The camera then zooms into Dave's face and the effect of water pouring over the screens occurs which traditionally means that it is the beginning of a dream sequence. Dave transforms into a punk rocker (black leather jacket and spikey hair) and the screen switches into color in the dream (a reverse of filmic conventions). The setting is revealed as a 80s-themed party (bright colors and flashing lights) as Dave explores a constricted room and finds his wife being harassed by two strange characters with exaggerated features (played by bandmates Nate Mendel and Pat Smear). The viewers then find themselves back at the home diving into his wife's dream, which appears to be a completely different feel from Dave's dream (dark colors and spacious landscape). At first, she is sitting peacefully reading a novel on a rocking chair in a secluded cabin. Suddenly, a hand comes out from underneath a floorboard. Suggesting that this may be the beginning of a frightful nightmare.





### *Rock n'Roller Dave in a rage (Figure 1)*

#### Still Shot taken from the Foo Fighter's "Everlong" Music Video

Back in Dave's dream, the viewer can immediately see the anger in his face (carried through with red lighting) as he is ready to fight the two troublemakers (Shown in Figure 1). Dave's hand then grows drastically in size (Gondry playing with the notion of exaggeration in dreams). The shot then goes back to Dave dreaming in bed and punching the air as he slaps them around. This scene is humorous and definitely one I will focus on during our discussions. I will also point out the various color choices and lighting in each dream setting as well as the bedroom scene that sets the mood as we move along. Moreover, Gondry ingeniously sets up his viewers for huge plot twist with an allegedly "back to reality" scene. What viewers might perceive as real for the couple, actually becomes another dream and thus carries the feeling of a sense of impending doom. Unexpectedly, the intruders (now in the bedroom) take-off what appear to be costumes, and new bodies sprout out of their mouths. Simultaneously, their instruments appear and they begin to jam out. Their performance of the song takes over entire scene, leaving the viewers to believe that the previous events were nothing but an awful dream. I absolutely love the playfulness of this video, and there are a number of possibilities for moods to be addressed. The world of "Everlong" seems unsafe, almost unhinged, and even tense with anxiety because the characters encounter violence and danger- a relatable concept for my students. This video subscribes to the logic of our own dreams. It also entails the ridiculousness that can magically appear because the characters take on almost superhuman powers during their course of action. In other words, Gondry wanted his viewers to grasp that reality may be out of reach, and we are just left trying to make sense of the logic that we see.

### **Spike Jonze**

Jonze, born Adam Spiegel, is an American director well known for his love of pranks and practical jokes. He began his filming career by making skateboard videos, and became popular among skateboarders because of his creative captures of tricks and fails simply for entertainment. Nonetheless, Jonze first broke into music video by working with the Beastie Boys in 1992. This was a great collaboration because the band members had a similar personality and shared his funny sensibility. Jonze's first MTV success occurred with a video for Breeders' "Cannonball" (1993). It was a notable friendly version of experimental filmmaking, and was recognized for its strange humor yet unexpected elegance. In 1994, Jonze worked alongside Weezer to direct their music video for "Buddy Holly." This video is both a parody and tribute as Jonze places Weezer's members in a *Forest Gump*-inspired real world. However, it is a real world that brings admiration to old-fashioned TV shows such as *Happy Days*. This created a unique cultural universe in which a modern band engages, in a sense, with characters in shows from their childhood, and it was a success. I personally appreciate the wholesomeness of tone, and the attention to detail in how these shows were conventionally played on-air. It was critically acclaimed and at the 1995 MTV Video Music Awards, it won Best Alternative Video, Breakthrough Video, Best Direction, and Best Editing. This was well deserved, and Jonze continued to enhance his trademark humor with music videos that followed. One of the particular videos that I would like to share with students is his music video for the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" (1994).



*The Quirky Cops (Figure 2)*

Still Shot taken from Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" Music Video

"Sabotage" is also a parody of sorts that teasingly mimics TV cop shows in the 1970s that star the three members of the band as these quirky cops (Shown in Figure 2). To match the setting, they have similar costumes that include aviator sunglasses, excessive facial hair, and heavy make-up emphasizing their with feisty demeanors. The prominent lighting as well as color choices are effectively out-of-date and suitable for the overall design concept. The opening shot focuses on a flashing police siren as they are on a pursuit in a cop-related cliché that viewers have seen before. Overall, this is a video in constant motion and nearly every shot is filled with speeding cars and cops on a chase. Jonze executes a variety of camera movements that go perfectly in sync with the tempo of the song itself. His format makes the viewer become part of the pursuits. The piece moves from one scene to another quite rapidly, developing an action-packed feel that ties in with the intensity of the music. The Beastie Boys, in character, make wildly over-the-top gestures and virtually meaningless hand motions in their quest to catch the bad people, which visibly pokes fun at actors playing small-screen cops. The freeze-frames are also a purposeful touch that jabs amusingly at the cheesiness of these lovable traditional shows. It is evident that this video is a reflection of both Jonze's and the Beastie Boys' funny mischievous personalities. Although my students may not be familiar with the subject of the parody, I am confident they will find amusement as we analyze its composition.

### **Nuno Eduardo Gomes**

Gomes is a Venezuelan director who is widely prevalent in the Latino music industry. His videos are among the most sought after on Youtube- the most common video sharing and social media platform among this current youth (Gen Z). Thus this is a sensible choice for my predominantly Latino students. At the age of 19, Nuno obtained a scholarship at the "Instituto de Cine y TV de Venezuela", where he completed his studies and specialized in the area of Film Direction. One of his first short films, titled "Con sabor a Helado" (2008), was the KODAK Filmschool Competition Venezuela Regional Winning Film. Presently, Gomes has more than 250 videos under his belt, and has worked with many artists such as Bad Bunny, Doja Cat, Ozuna, Cardi B, Sia, and Alejandro Sanz. One of his most famous music videos now has over 1.6 billion YouTube views since it premiered in 2016. Titled "Andas en Mi Cabeze" it was made for singers Chino Y Nacho that feature Daddy Yankee. Consequently, this will be the third music video I will present.





*A proposal in Caracas, Venezuela (Figure 3)*

Still Shot taken from Chino Y Nacho's "Andad en Mi aCabeza" Music Video

In this music video, Gomes' celebrates the concept of "old-school" romance that features couples and their "crazy marriage proposals". One of these is especially personal because Gomes casts his girlfriend and best friend to portray a couple getting engaged on a beach setting. The entire video takes its viewers on what seems to be a vacation in beautiful locations of Miami, Florida and Caracas, Venezuela (the hometown of Gomes) as they witness these passion-filled proposals (Shown in Figure 3). The overall feel of the video is fresh and exciting, filled with almost glowing lighting and pleasant colors. Even the color of the clothing is noticeably bright and lively. As the viewer is moved from one scenery to another, Gomes continuously zooms the camera in and out and it to give the spectator the opportunity to admire its beauty as these events occur. He noticeably plays with balance in each shot which can indicate where he would like the viewers' attention to go while creating a sense of harmony and comfort. I also appreciate the culture and diversity that is thoughtfully incorporated throughout the scenes. The couples are of different ethnicity, economic status, and age. The viewer can even see glimpses of religious representations in various landmarks. It creates a sense of inclusion and awareness that I trust my students will find admirable. The overall composition feels charming and leaves its viewer on a cheerful note. Although there is no real direct dialogue between characters, the viewers cannot help but feel excitement for the couples in the video. It noticeably depicts a happy state of mind, and a sense of new beginnings to come.

I will play these music videos in their entirety and acquire first thoughts and reactions that will commence our audiovisual study. From time to time, I will refer back to these videos and share still-shots of significant scenes when introducing film analysis terms. However, to keep the momentum flowing, I will have the students (in small groups) explore music videos from another renowned American director: Dave Meyers. Although my students may not know him by name, I am confident that they have watched many of his videos that ranged from 1997 to the present. Below are the following music videos I will be considering:

Korn - "Did My Time" (2003)

Katy Perry - "Firework" (2010)

Kendrick Lamar and SZA - "All the Stars" (2018)

Ariana Grande- "No Tears Left to Cry" (2018)

Billie Eilish - "Bad Guy" (2019)

Ed Sheeran - "Bad Habits" (2021)

Coldplay and Selena Gomez - "Let Somebody Go" (2022)

## The Anatomy of Film/Music Videos

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There are numerous ways to examine the technical components and elements that all come together to produce this art form. It can be difficult to narrow down the focus, but a resource that I found particularly helpful is the "Anatomy of Film" by author Bernard F. Dick (2002). According to Dick,

Film is often called a collaborative art, in the sense of requiring the talents of vast number of specialists, all of whom are generally acknowledged in the end credits. It is also an art in which one person, the director, is expected to integrate all of these contributions into a totality.

In a future unit, I hope to expand this film study, and guide students to explore story lines, symbolism/metaphors, and cultural context in short films. In the interim, I will adhere to only the "staging" aspect of music videos, and Dick does a remarkable job at simplifying the essentials. Therefore, my concentration will be on the following: types of shots, the sequences and arrangement of shots, the cuts and transitions, coloring and lighting the image, visual/special effects, and props/costumes.

Types of Shots
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**Definition:** a shot is the recording in a single operation of the camera. In other words, series of frames that runs continuously for a period of time.

*Close-Ups Shots* are meant to reveal a particular emotion, or bring emphasis to a subject. Oftentimes, they have a direct bearing on the plot or theme.

*Long Shots* make the subject part of the environment. It can convey the vast of its nature.

*High-Angle Shots* means the camera is positioned above the subject. It is also referred as *God's Eye Shot* which can suggest that there is an unseen presence looking down at the subject or that the subject is inferior.

*Low-Angle Shots* means the camera is positioned below the subject. This can make subject appear larger than it actually is. This can suggest dominance or power.

*Objective Shots* is what the camera sees. Typically, the viewer is not seeing the scene from any character's point of view.

*Subjective Shots* is what the character sees. It offers a one-sided take on reality. It can also be a way to exclude the viewer from participating in the whole action.

*Point-of-View Shot*, a related subjective shot, represents the point of you of character. When the camera is in motion, it expresses the presences of emotional state.

*Framing the Shot* refers to the arrangement of details in terms of visual and dramatic points being expressed.

*Tight Framing* gives a feeling of oppression or the subject appears to be confided.

(Note: Dick suggests that framing should be slightly asymmetrical. If not, a sense of depth will be lost)

*Canted Shot* results into a leaning composition that emphasizes the mental state of a subject.

*Tracking Shot* is when the camera is moving with, towards, alongside, or away from its subjects. This can physically draw the viewers into the action, and even pull them into a subject's consciousness.

More specifically, in music videos, directors commonly utilize *close-up shots* to focus strictly on the artist's face during their performances. *Wide shots* constitute another component used in music videos when a director wants to show several of people or a specific location while also including the artist. *Over-the-shoulder shots* are used when a musical artist is acting or speaking to another person. This depicts a conversation or brings focus to something the artist is looking at. In all, these shots are purposefully arranged in such a way that they flow with the tempo of the music.

#### Zooms and Freezes

*Zooming* is the moving depiction of a subject. It does not mean that the camera is moving, for it is the lens that is adjusted through varying focal lengths. This can flatten the image, and alter the sense of depth.

*Freeze Frame* is a form of stopping motion by optically repeating a single frame. The movement is suddenly paused and the image becomes a still photograph. This can imply that the subject is immobile, helpless, or indecisive.

#### Types of Sequence

Definition: A sequence is a group of shots that form a self-contained segment within a film.

*Linear Sequence* refers to one action linking up with another. This is in chronological order and creates a mini-drama that consists of a beginning, middle, and an end. This can also mean that some details are omitted and the viewer is expected to make the connections themselves.

*Associative Sequence* refers to the connection of scenes grounded by an object or a series of objects. This can create a dramatic focus to the object.

*Montage Sequence* refers to a series of shots arranged in a particular manner with for a reason. This often means that the shots follow each other in a rapid chain, focusing on event or events for a few seconds. It can also be unified images. When a montage ends, the action begins.

### Cuts

Definition: (not to be confused with the verb used by the director to halt the action) A cut is the union of two shots that shows the first then it is immediately replaced by the second. It shows what the previous shot did not.

*Straight Cut* implies that one image is instantly replaced by another.

*Contrast Cut* implies that the images replacing each other are different in nature.

*Crosscut/Parallel Cuts* exhibit two actions that are occurring at the same time.

*Jump Cut* breaks a film's continuous flow of connection so as to leave a gap in the action. Transitions between subjects may not be seen. Jump cuts can occur within a single shot, when a portion of what is filmed is excised causing the figures in the image to appear to jump. This can propel the shot's tempo.

*Form Cut*: the action of cutting from one object to another that is similar in its shape.

*Match Cut* implies that one shot matches (complements) the other. This produces a smooth transition and there is no break in continuousness.

### Transitions

Definition: Bridging the scenes. It is a way of phasing from one scene to another, These are more noticeable than straight cuts.

*The Fade-out* is thought to be the simplest transition when the light decreases and the screen turns black. On the contrary, *Fade-In* is when the light begins to increase and the image appears gradually. Typically used to mark the passage of time or lapse of time.

*The Dissolve* indicates continuity as it slowly replaces one shot with another. This can potential serve variety of functions. This can also have the effect of dramatic foreshadowing or recapitulation.

*The Form Dissolve*: the act of merging two images with the same or contour. Directors use this transition simply to make it "easy on the eyes."

*The Wipe* is a traveling line across the screen as one scene replaces another. It was an iconic stylish transition famously used in the 1930s and 40s. It depicts a theatrical effect.

*The Iris* is also known as the masking effect, which means everything is black except the circle of what seems like a telescope. The frame can also change in shape, and this merely depends on the form through which the director wants the viewer to see the image.

*Irising in/out* is the expansion of the dark frame until the image is exposed or diminishing until the image disappears.

### Continuity Editing

Definition: The revising principles that affect the film's rhythm, time, space, tone, and theme.

*Rhythm* is the tempo and flow of one shot to another. It can also mean changing the pace of sequences. Directors can change the speed, movement, and pace of their shots in service to the audio/music.

*Time*: the measure of a continual sequence of events. Parallel cutting makes it possible for two actions/shots to synchronize showing one after the other repeatedly in an effective manner. In music video, time moves much faster, and the director must instantaneously make cuts back and forth between shots. Jump cutting can be another approach to transition from one scene to the next that emphasizes or coincides with the audio/music.

*Space*: a director has the ability to change our perception of space between subjects and character by their variation of camera angles and shots while maintaining the consistency and reasoning behind each scene.

*Tone*: the vibe or ambience of scenes. Just like tempo, it can vary in a film or music video. This certainly transpires through a director's choice in lighting, shape, and color that adheres to the music or audio.

*Theme* is the directors' central, unifying concept. It is guided by the envisioned genre or lyrics. In music videos, this can mean choice of location or setting.

In music videos, editing is a significant component because it harmonizes with the beat of the music. It brings a sense of order and the aesthetics are structured in a way to make evoke the audience.

#### Coloring the Image

##### *Black-and-White Film*

Before color was an option, colors were merely imagined on screen. The directors worked within the parameters of monochromatic colors so the viewer can perceive what the different shades of grey were representing. Dramatic contrasts or luminous lighting was the most effect way to suggest significance in these films. White was also considered an ambivalent symbol that suggested innocence. On the other hand, it can also suggest loss of innocence such as death. Nonetheless, values of white can be render so art fully that the absence of color isn't missed. Once color was a possibility, black-and-white still remained an artistic choice. This can be used to alter the perception of reality, or to mimic a specific place in time.

##### *Color Film*

Color may be used for a more natural feel, but this should not imply that realism and color are synonymous. Color choices can be symbolic, or bring emphasis to a subject. Often, specific colors are chosen deliberately to evoke the viewer. Color can affect viewers' psychologically and physically, sometimes without awareness, and can be used as a strong device within scenes.

In music videos, color can be used to create harmony or bring attention to a key visual theme. It is basically in every other element of *mise-en-scene*: costume, makeup, location, as well as props and have connotations that are used as representation or symbolism. Videos in black and white can be used as a way of showing a time lapse such as flash backs and can suggest that the lyrics are referring to something in the past which is presented through the visuals.

#### Lighting the Image

*Key Lighting* is the principal source of illumination and often leaves shadows when used alone. *Fill Lighting* is an auxiliary light that creates softness and less intensity. This can often be used on the opposite side of Key light.

*Back Lighting* is placed above or behind the subject. When combined with key and fill light, it creates a sense of depth.

*Top Lighting* is used to create an atmosphere of youthfulness or spirituality.

*Side Lighting* means half-lit and half-shadow, and it can indicate a sense of split personality or a morally unclear character.

*Bottom Lighting* denotes a sinister demeanor.

In a music video, lighting also allows its viewer to recognize the genre and style. For example, a scene lit by using “natural” light is often associated with country type music videos. Artificial lights, strobe lights, and colorful lights would more likely be seen in a dance pop/hip hop video. Grunge style videos use darker, higher contrast. The direction of the light also gives the viewers an indication as to the time of day in which the scene is taking place. Lastly, lighting can also change throughout the music video depicting different scenes connected to the mood and tone of the music.

#### Special Effects/Visual Effects

*Morphing* is a special effect in computer graphics that directors use to change one shape into another in order to challenge the viewer’s perception of reality. It is a form of trickery.

*Visual Effects* (most common term) are typically part of the narrative and create a particular vision. These are typically used by directors to appeal to the eye and achieve what cannot be achieved without the assistance of digital technology.

#### Props/Costumes

In most music videos, *props* are used to link the music with visual imagery. This becomes part of the narrative in order to make it believable to its audience. The props in a music video can add value to the idea it is trying to portray. *Costumes* are often used to represent certain characters in various ways such as their persona. Different artists would also wear different clothes to symbolize what they are portraying in the music video. This can be influenced by time and location.

## Teaching Strategy

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The Critical Analysis Process: With guidance and structure, my students will break down the three music videos as they have other artistic practices. We will dive deep into the notion of *Mise-en-scène* by utilizing the five levels of analysis throughout the unit:

*Examine*– First, they will watch the music videos alone and begin a discussion about their initial reactions and thoughts. I will follow-up with leading questions such as: What type of music genre do you think this is? What is its pace? What mood/tone is it portraying? How do you know?

*Experience*– After having shared the terminology with my students, we will re-watch the videos with the music, as we pay closer attention to its components. This will drive our visual focus. Does the visual imagery correspond with the music? How so? Does the visual mood change alongside the music? What are some notable elements?



*Interpret-* I will provide a worksheet with specific still shots of the video and ask guiding questions for further analysis. Students will also have the opportunity to use film terms. The goal is to make connections between prior knowledge, life experience, and the director’s choice in artistic elements. We will try to discover what they are trying to express.

*Reflect-* Taking into consideration the elements of the video’s visual imagery, we will make connections to the music, and how it makes us feel. A leading question would be: what is it about the song that relates to the imagery in the video, and how does the director depict this? How does help understand how films evoke audience feelings?

*Respond-* Students will have the opportunity to react to what they have discovered in these music videos as well as their artistic elements. They articulate opinions about it, and share their outlook with their classmates. I anticipate opinions to be different; thus, I will encourage open-mindedness in order to appreciate different perspectives.

Guides to the Psychology of Color and to “Staging” Elements: Because I am teaching a diverse groups of students at various levels of literacy comprehension, on occasion, we will need to stop and review a few terms. I will provide a guide with a list of moods associated with colors (three examples below). This will aid students in identifying colors associated with moods when observing the audiovisuals. Further, I will share a copy of essential components related to the “staging” aspect of these videos as well as definitions. It will consist of the following: types of shots, the sequences and arrangement of shots, the cuts and transitions, lighting the image, visual/special effects, and props/costumes. Visual examples from music videos will also be shared. Once we have confirmed that we are comfortable with the terminology, we can proceed with the lesson.

Color: Red	Color: Blue	Color: Yellow
Positive vs Negative	Positive vs Negative	Positive vs Negative
Power      Anger	Trust      Coldness	Optimism      Irrationality
Passion      Danger	Loyalty      Aloofness	Warmth      Fear
Energy      Warning	Dependability      Unfriendliness	Happiness      Caution
Excitement      Defiance	Logic      Sadness	Creativity      Anxiety
Fearlessness      Agression	Serenity      Uncaring	Intellect      Frustration
Strength      Pain	Security      Unappetizing	Extraversion      Cowardice

*Learning Logs:* Learning logs are used to help students keep track of learning during the class discussion and any in collaboration work. Therefore, after utilizing the strategy shared above to interpret music videos as art, I will have students jot down the similarities they have discovered from every discussion in their sketchbooks. This will help students when they are seeking clarification and inspiration during their final assignment. Additional sketch-notes will also be encouraged.

*Collaborative Learning:* Collaborative learning is a significant strategy that I will utilize for most of this unit because it helps students to establish a strong team and work together to solve a given problem as well as encourage different perspectives. There are several benefits students get when working in a group setting such as: develop social skills, learn from peers, build trust, engage in learning, and gain confidence. This will truly be beneficial for students as they begin to formulate their own thinking process for the final assignment, and assist each other when one is struggling.

*Think-Pair-Share:* Oftentimes, some students may be too shy or insecure to share their thoughts and ideas with the entire class. Therefore, I utilize this collaborative learning technique. A student will first examine & think about the video alone (jot down thoughts in sketchbook). Afterward, they will have the opportunity to share their insight with another classmate.

*Jigsaw Method:* The jigsaw strategy is said to improve social interactions in learning and support diversity. It involves separating an assignment into subtasks, where students in groups will investigate and explore their assigned piece of work, which in this case is a selected music video. Subsequently, the group will essentially educate other groups about their assigned video and study of director's artistic choices. The students would then discuss ideas between groups before coming back together as a whole classroom and sharing their experience.

## Classroom Activities

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Prior to sharing the three specific music videos, we will devote a class session to present a history of music videos. In order to appreciate this artistic form, I will explain the evolution that transpired, and briefly introduce the three directors we will be focusing on. I will also share films that they have directed in their career so that students are aware that this can extend further than short videos. As optional homework, I will encourage them bring me the title of a music video they would like to explore in this unit. I will either add it to the list of videos to pick from for lesson two or use still images from the music videos as a "Bell Ringer" during the beginning of each class session. (This is a short informal activity that students complete as soon as they enter a classroom. Typically, bell ringers are an indication that class has begun, and immediately engage students' attention by priming them to think about the course material)

### **Lesson 1: "I can examine and recognize artistic elements in a music video." (Duration: 2 class sessions)**

Summary- In this lesson, students will be introduced to music videos as an art form. We will view the videos and follow the five levels of analysis as stated above. After discussing their initial thoughts and reactions, an analysis worksheet for each music video will be distributed. It will contain a number of still shots from each video with leading questions in order for them to focus on specific film components. First, I will give them time to work together with their tablemates (**Think-Pair-Share**) in answering the questions before sharing their responses as a whole (Example below):

Objective-

- Observe, recognize, and discuss moods and tones represented in videos
- Make connections between prior knowledge and new information using the process of analysis
- Note relevant information using visual literacy
- Formulate artistic intention behind specific still shots in the music videos

Student Analysis Worksheet-

## Cinematic Techniques in “Everlong” by Foo Fighters

(Directed by Michel Gondry)

Examine these still shots from the music video and answer the questions in your sketchbooks.

1. The first moving images are in black and white. Why do you think that is?

2. Pouring water down the screen gives what affect? Why does it transition into color afterward?

3. Comment about the size of the room and people. What does this imply?

4. Why was this added in the video? How does it make you feel?

5. The phone is taking up most of the space in the room. Why is that?

6. Notice the tone created in this scene. What mood is the director trying to portray here?

7. Why did the director chose a close-up shot with red lighting?

8. Comment on the transformation of objects here. Why does this occur?

How have the colors and tones changes in the last few seconds of the video. Why do you think that is?

### Lesson 2: “I can practice Mise-en-scène analysis to identify the key components in a music video, and explain a director’s intentions.” (Duration: 3 class sessions)

Summary- In this lesson, students will work in groups of 3-4. They will select a music video from an approved list that I provide. Together, they will observe and analyze their music video. Subsequently, they will create an 8-10 minute presentation of their discoveries and educate other groups about the video (Jigsaw Method). In their presentation, students will provide a brief narrative of the video, explain the mood and tones they believe is expressed through the scenes, and find a minimum of five notable still shots from the music video that they feel strongly demonstrates cinematic techniques such as in lesson 1. This will also give students the chance to use film terminology as they present their Mise-en-scène analysis. After they have shared to at least 3 small groups, I will select 2 groups to present to the entire class. Once we review the videos and discuss thoughts, I will have them write a brief reflection of what they have learned thus far in their sketchbooks.

Objective-

- Understand and appreciate videos as an art form
- Develop a deeper understanding of staging components in a music video
- Develop own analysis as well as confidently share findings and opinions with peers
- Recognize a director’s aesthetic intentions

Student Assignments-

Mise-en-scène Analysis Presentation Guidelines

Group Member’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Music Video and Artist(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Music Genre \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Director \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Release \_\_\_\_\_

- Share first thoughts about the music video
- Provide a narrative of the video
- What are the moods and tones of the music and the video? Do they coincide? Why or why not?
- How does the director evoke their audience?
- Share 5 still shots from the music video that clearly demonstrate cinematic techniques or film elements you have learned about and explain how the director implements them to tie in with the music. This can include any of the following:

-Types of shots

-Sequences and arrangement of shots

-Cuts and transitions

-Colors

-Lighting

-Visual/Special effects

-Props/Costumes

- If you had the chance to direct this music video, what would you have done differently? Why?
- Share final thoughts and overall experience in analyzing this video

### **Lesson 3: “I can create a video using four film components to evoke my audience influenced by a song.” (5 class sessions)**

Summary- In this lesson, students will be working independently and have the opportunity to take on the role as a director (and editor). They will create a quick 10-15 second video using a song of their choice and focus on three film elements (but not limited to) we have covered. Because we do not have the technical resources to create a sophisticated video, they will use their cell phones or borrow an iPad from the classroom and use a video application such as TikTok, Instagram, iMovie, etc. Before filming, students will be required to strategically map out their ideas in their sketchbook following the guidelines below. I will devote a class session for peer and teacher feedback so they can brainstorm and deliberate plans together so they can go into creating their short video with self-assurance and clarity. Two classes will be devoted to filming and editing help (studio-time). However, part of their assignment may be done outside of the classroom. I will also provide lighting equipment and props that they can utilize in the process. In addition, they will share their videos with the class and discuss similarities and differences among the videos created.

Objective-

- Recognize that their experiences and perceptions have value
- Explore the elements of art in videos independently
- Gain experience with sequential imagery to depict mood and tone that adheres with the music
- Provide meaningful feedback to peers based on knowledge of content
- Present finished video

Student Assignments-

## My Music Video's Strategic Plan

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Song and Artist(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Music Genre \_\_\_\_\_

I chose this song because \_\_\_\_\_

The mood of the song is \_\_\_\_\_ I know this because \_\_\_\_\_

I will imitate this mood visually by \_\_\_\_\_

My main object or subject in my video will be \_\_\_\_\_ This is because \_\_\_\_\_

Types of film elements you will use in your video (select from the following and describe how):

-Types of shots -Sequences and arrangement of shots -Cuts and transitions

-Colors -Lighting -Visual/Special effects

Element 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Element 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Element 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Element 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, what would you like your audience to feel from your video

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix

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Our school is an IB (International Baccalaureate) certified school and I am implementing IB's framework for teaching and learning in arts for the Middle Years Programme (MYP). For this unit, the key concept I will focus on is **Aesthetics**. This is because it deals with the characteristics, creation, meaning and perception of artistic beauty. This study of aesthetics will develop skills for the critical appreciation and analysis of film as art, culture, and its nature. The related concepts (promoting a deeper learning of the key concept) will be **Visual Culture** and **Interpretation**. The global context in which the students learn from is **Personal and Cultural Expression** with the exploration to develop being **Analysis and Argument**. This is the proper context since the students will be introduced to films/videos as an art form and learn to recognize as well as understand the

visual choices the directors made in creating the video. Students will identify parts and relationships (to art), and interpret information to reach conclusions about moods conveyed. That way, they can better understand this art form as a whole. The approach to learning that I will teach these students is called **CreativeThinking Skills**. The expectation is to make connections among ideas as well as apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas and a product (a mini video of their own). In addition, they will explore the ways in which they study, reflect on, extend and enjoy creativity; this unit thus serves as an extended appreciation of the aesthetic in films or any moving pictures for that matter.

### **National Core Arts Standards Addressed**

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and Conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

*VA:Cr1.1.8a Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media.*

Enduring Understanding: Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

Essential Questions: What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

Through their observation, analysis, and class discussion, students will be able to understand a filmmaker /director's approach in aesthetics, and realize the tone and mood they are trying to convey with their use of specific elements.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

*VA:Re8.1.8a Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.*

Enduring Understanding: People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.

Essential Question(s): What is the value of engaging in the process of art criticism? How can the viewer "read" a work of art as text? How does knowing and using visual art vocabularies help us understand and interpret works of art?

Through this study, students will better understand that there should be purpose by every process and creation. In addition, they will implement film elements in their own work to convey a specific idea and mood.

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