

Film Vocabulary

Film-making terms are not always so easy to grasp. Here are some words that you might want to incorporate in your review.

3D. A film that has a three-dimensional, stereoscopic form or appearance, giving the life-like illusion of depth; often achieved by viewers donning special red/blue (or green) or polarized lens glasses; when 3-D images are made interactive so that users feel involved with the scene, the experience is called virtual reality.

ADAPTATION. the presentation of one art form through another medium; a film based upon, derived from a stage play, short story, book, article, history, novel, video game, comic strip or similar, which basically preserves both the setting and dialogue of the original.

ANIMATION. Animation is the technique in which each frame of a film is produced individually, whether generated as a computer graphic, or by photographing a drawn image, or by repeatedly making small changes to a model unit and then photographing the result with a special animation camera. When the frames are strung together and the resulting film is viewed at a speed of 16 or more frames per second, there is an illusion of continuous movement . Generating such a film is very labor intensive and tedious, though the development of computer animation has greatly sped up the process.

ANTAGONIST. An antagonist is a character, group of characters, or an institution, that represents the opposition against which the protagonist must contend. In the classic style of story wherein the action consists of a hero fighting a villain, the two can be regarded as protagonist and antagonist, respectively. The antagonist may also represent a major threat or obstacle to the main character by their very existence, without necessarily actively targeting him or her.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC. A film, usually animated, in which animals, creatures or objects are given human qualities, abilities, and characteristics.

ASIDE. When a character in the films breast the "fourth wall" and speaks directly to the audience.

BACKGROUND MUSIC. Refers to the music that accompanies a scene or action in a film, usually to establish a specific mood or enhance the emotion.

BIT PART. A small acting role, usually only one scene, with very few lines or action. Also referred to as a cameo role, extra, or walk on.

BLUESCREEN. a special-effects process whereby actors work in front of an evenly-lit, monochromatic (usually blue or green) background or screen. The background is then replaced (or matted) in post-production by chroma-keying or optical printer, allowing

other footage or computer-generated images to form the image; since 1992, most films use a green-screen.

CAMERA ANGLE. The perspective from which the camera photographs a subject.

CAST. Refers to all the actors appearing in the film, usually broken into two parts: the leads with speaking roles and the the seconds or supporting characters, background layers or extras, and bit players.

CGI. Stands for "computer generated imagery," a term referring to the use of 3D computer graphics and technology in filmmaking.

CHARACTER. The fictitious or real individual in a story, performed by an actor, also called player.

CLAYMATION. Clay animation is one of many forms of stop motion animation. Each animated piece, either character or background, is "deformable" — made of a malleable substance, usually Plasticine clay. In claymation, each object is sculpted in clay or a similarly pliable material, usually around a wire skeleton called an armature. the object is arranged on the set (background), a film frame is exposed, and the object or character is then moved slightly by hand. Another frame is taken, and the object is moved slightly again. This cycle is repeated until the animator has achieved the desired amount of film.

CLIMAX. The climax is the high point of the story, where a culmination of events create the peak of the conflict. The climax usually features the most conflict and struggle, and usually reveals any secrets or missing points in the story. Alternatively, an anti-climax may occur, in which an expectedly difficult event is revealed to be incredibly easy or of paltry importance. The climax isn't always the most important scene in a story.

CLOSE UP. A shot taken from a close distance in which the scale of the object is magnified, appears relatively large and fills the entire frame to focus attention and emphasize its importance.

CONFLICT. Conflict is the "problem" in a story which triggers the action. There are five basic types of conflict: *Person vs. Person*: One character in a story has a problem with one or more of the other characters; *Person vs. Society*: A character has a conflict or problem with society; *Person vs. Himself or Herself*: A character struggles inside and has trouble deciding what to do; *Person vs. Nature*: A character has a problem with some element of nature, (e.g., a snowstorm, an avalanche, the bitter cold); *Person vs. Fate*: A character has to battle what seems to be an uncontrollable problem.

CONTINUITY. The system of editing that provides for a continuous and clear movement of events and images in a film.

CRITIC. A person who writes a review of a film, discussing its details including the content and characters, a critique of their performances, camera work, directing, editing, production and script.

DOCUMENTARY. Documentary film is a broad category of moving pictures intended to document some aspect of reality. A "documentary film" may be shot on film stock, videotape or a digital camera. "Documentary" has been described as a "filmmaking practice, a cinematic tradition, and mode of audience reception" that is continually evolving and is without clear boundaries.

DOUBLE. A person who temporarily takes the leading player's place for a dangerous or difficult stunt, or to stand in for the actor for any other reason.

EMPATHY. Empathy, which literally translates as *in feeling*, is the capability to share another being's emotions and feelings.

F/X. Abbreviation for special effects.

FORMAT: Typical formats are animation, biographical, documentary, experimental, musical and short.

GENRE. Refers to a class or type of film that shares common, predictable or distinctive artistic and thematic elements or iconography (e.g., bad guys in Westerns wear black hats), narrative content, plot, and subject matter, mood and milieu (or setting) or characters. Typical genres would include: action, adventure, comedy, drama, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance and thriller.

HERO. Hero, or heroine for females, refers to characters who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and the will for self sacrifice—that is, heroism—for some greater good of all humanity. Stories of heroism may serve as moral examples.

JUMP CUT. An abrupt, disorienting transitional device in the middle of a continuous shot in which the action is noticeably advanced in time and/or cut between two similar scenes. May be done accidentally or purposefully to create an artistic effect.

MOCUMENTARY. A fictional, farcical film that has the style, look and feel of a documentary, with irreverent humor, parody, or slapstick that is deliberately designed to make fun of the documentary or subject it features.

MONOLOGUE. A scene when an actor gives a lengthy, unbroken speech without interruption by another character.

MORPH. The transformation of one digital image into another with computer animation.

PLOT. Plot is often designed with a narrative structure, storyline or story arc, that includes exposition, conflict, rising action and climax, followed by a falling action and resolution.

PROTAGONIST. A protagonist is the main character of a literary, theatrical, film, video game, or musical narrative, around whom the events of the narrative's plot revolve and with whom the audience is intended to share the most empathy. He or she is often referred to as the "good guy."

RED CARPET. Literally, to "roll out" a welcoming red carpet, laid down for major ceremonies such as film premieres or awards ceremonies to signify an important, honorary event with dignitaries and esteemed guests attending, often the locale for live interviews and photo opportunities.

SET. The environment where the action takes place in a film; when used in contrast to location, it refers to an artificially-constructed time/place (a backdrop painting or a dusty Western street with a facade of storefronts); supervised by the film's art director

SPECIAL EFFECTS. A broad term used by the film industry meaning to create fantastic visual and audio illusions that cannot be accomplished by normal means, such as travel into space.

STEREOTYPING. Portraying a particular character, or group with a formulaic, conforming, exaggerated and oversimplified representation. When stereotyping is used in an offensive way, it shows **BIAS** towards a particular group or character.

TRAGEDY. Tragedy is a form of art based on human suffering that offers its audience pleasure. Tragedy refers to a specific tradition of drama that has played a unique and important role historically in the self-definition of Western civilization.

VILLIAN. A villain (also known as the "bad guy", "black hat", or "heavy") is an "evil" character in a story. The villain usually is the antagonist, the character who tends to have a negative effect on other characters. A female villain is sometimes called a villainess. Random House Unabridged Dictionary defines villain as "a cruelly malicious person who is involved in or devoted to wickedness or crime; scoundrel; or a character in a play, novel, or the like, who constitutes an important evil agency in the plot"

Sources:

<http://www.filmsite.org/index.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_criticism