



# A GLOSSARY OF FILM TERMINOLOGY

## A

**academy awards,(the):** officially known as The Oscars, are a set of awards given annually for excellence of cinematic achievements.

**action description:** the overt, physical actions that happen on screen, such as "He falls down the stairs" or "She pulls a gun, hands shaking."

**actor/actress:** a gifted individual who has studied the craft of acting in order to portray roles in performances of dramatic literature.

**ADR (automatic dialogue replacement):** re-recorded dialogue in a studio to match what is on the screen. Is used to improve sound quality.

**alter-ego:** a substitute "self" for a writer, usually a protagonist in the writer's story.

**ambience:** the overall quality of mood, tone, or atmosphere in a film.

**ambient sound:** background noise recorded to add atmosphere to a soundtrack.

**antagonist:** a character that puts barriers and reversals in the way of a protagonist's progress or objective.

**archetype:** a universal character modeled upon those that have been appearing in stories since the time of our ancient ancestors.

**assistant director:** a film crew member whose job it is to manage the set protocols and keep the film shoot on schedule.

**atmosphere:** the dominant mood or emotional tone of a film.

**audience:** body of theatre-goers the screenplay writer had in mind when writing the screenplay.

**audience expectation:** particular elements of a film genre which the audience consciously or unconsciously expects to see.

**audition:** test piece by an actor/actress to get a role in a film.

**aural:** a film element that can be heard (such as an off screen sound like a dog howling or a gun firing).

## B

**barrier:** a first act obstacle in the way of a protagonist's objective.

**beat:** a unit of action within a scene or act that marks subtle shifts in the direction or control of the plot action.

**bokeh:** refers to the portions of an image that are defocused or blurry. In the filmmaker's toolkit, bokeh is not only an aesthetically pleasing quality, but it also allows the filmmaker to focus the viewer's eye on an object or area of interest in the frame.

**book-ending:** a framing device within which a main plot line is presented as being told or read to another, often embellished by the use of a voice-over narration throughout the film (as in Raising Arizona, The Princess Bride, or Stand By Me)

**boxoffice mojo.com :** a website that tracks box office revenue in a systematic, algorithmic way. Tracking is done very closely to the day by day, actual tabulation of distributors, making it possible to see the general trend of a film's "earnings trajectory".

**buddy film:** a popular movie genre in which two protagonists (often confidantes) are in pursuit of the same objective (willingly or unwillingly) and sometimes trade off as catalysts to one another (e.g. the Lethal Weapon series) .

## C

**camera angle:** the angle from which a shot is to be taken (e.g., a close-up angle is a shot that should be made from a close proximity to the subject, either through tighter lens focusing or by the camera being placed physically closer to the action).

- **low angle (LA):** camera shoots subject from below; has the effect of making the subject look larger than normal-strong, powerful, threatening.
- **high angle (HA):** camera is above the subject; usually has the effect of making the subject look smaller than normal-weak, powerless, trapped.
- **eye level(EL):** accounts for 90 to 95% of shots seen because it is the most natural; camera is even with the key character's eyes.
- **dutch angle:** shot that is tilted sideways on the horizontal line (also called "canted" angle);used to add tension to a static frame, it creates a sinister or distorted view of a character.

**camera movement:** an action description in a screenplay that stipulates a specific move of the camera (such as "CAMERA PANS a crowded supermarket at rush hour.")

- **pan:** stationary camera move left or right.
- **tilt:** stationary camera moves up or down.
- **zoom:** the camera is stationary but the lens moves, making the objects appear to grow larger or smaller.
- **dolly:** the camera itself is moving with the action-on track, on wheels, or held by hand.

**cast:** the actors who portray the characters in the film.

**casting:** is a pre-production process for selecting a cast of actors, dancers, singers, models and other talent for a live or recorded performance. The process somewhat involves a series of auditions before a casting panel, composed of individuals such as the producer, director and/or choreographer.

**catalyst (catalytic):** a character, event, or circumstances which force a protagonist into a quest or achieving of an objective.

**catharsis:** the emotional effect upon an audience resulting from a re-living or re-experiencing of a remembered emotion.

**causal prediction:** an audience's unconscious forecasting of what will happen in a standard plot based on certain known causes and effects (e.g., boy meets girl, boy loses girl, causal prediction=boy gets girl).

**cause-and-effect:** a linear sequence of events that logically progress from one to the other, with the prior action "causing" the latter to happen. (E.g., a person witnesses a murder, causing the effect of the murderer stalking the witness.)

**cel (cellulose acetate):** a sheet of transparent material used in traditional animation.

**celluloid:** the base material of movie film.

**censorship:** the suppression of speech or other communication which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, or inconvenient to the general body of people as determined by a government, media outlet, or other controlling body.

**central question:** the question that arises in the audience's mind as they are introduced to a protagonist within a set of given circumstances that propel the character into some kind of action (e.g., "Will he/she find someone to love?, Will he/she survive the plane crash?" "Will he/she escape from the concentration camp?")

**character:** a person, animal, or spiritual entity that figures importantly in the telling of a story.

**character development:** the gradual revelation of information about a character that the audience needs to know in order to understand the character's motivations and intent.

**character diatribe:** Screenwriter Steve Tesich's writing technique for imagining characters and conflicts in the early genesis of a screenplay.

**character name:** the name of the character speaking, appearing just above the dialogue line, in all caps and centered within the dialogue margins.

**characterization:** an actor's interpretation of a role in a performance of dramatic literature.

**chroma key:** replacing a large area of flat color (usually blue or green) with another image. Also known as blue screen or green screen.

**CGI (computer-generated imagery):** Any images created in a computer, usually in 3D for animation or special effects.

**cinematic language:** a "language" of images (visual and aural) that tell story without the use of words. It includes all the techniques filmmakers use to tell a story on the screen — including camera distance, angle, and movement; editing; and sound.

**cinematography:** The art or technique of movie photography, including both the shooting and development of the film. (from Greek: *kinema* "movements" and *graphein* "to record")

**climax:** the point of highest intensity, catharsis, and suspense just before a resolution.

**compelling movement:** plot action imbued with the kind of forceful energy that pushes the plot forward, forcing the story line to move toward a climax and resolution.

**complication:** an action point that is introduced early in the film with no obvious effect or importance until later, when it becomes the unexpected source of difficulties or solutions to the protagonist's objective.

**composite character:** a character that is based upon more than one person or personality in a writer's life or imagination.

**conflict:** opposition, controversy, struggle, contradiction, or antipathy between a character and him/herself, his/her situation, another character, society, or spiritual belief.

**coverage:** the collection of shots a director gets for any given scene. Having enough is very important during the editing process.

**crane:** grip equipment with a long jib that allows the camera to be moved to a greater height.

**credits:** list of all the people that had a role in the making of a movie.

**crew:** the staff members of a film production

**cross-genre:** two genres combined to create a more rich and complex movie (e.g., Witness is a cross genre of an "action thriller" and a "tragic love story")

**cut:** the transitional movement on screen from one scene or shot to the next.

**cutaway:** a quick transition to another secondary shot (often of some lesser or ironic element of the setting) and back to the main shot. (E.g., a brief shot of a dog listening to a human conversation that is the subject of the scene).

## D

**denouement:** the final resolution to an intricate plot.

**depth of field (DOF):** is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear acceptably sharp in an image.

**designer:** an artist who designs some element of the look or sound of a film (such as set design, light design, costume design, sound design, etc.)

**development:** a) the gradual growth of a screenplay from germinal idea to fleshed out plot to final script; b) the breakdown, budgeting, and capitalization stage of bringing a screenplay into production (re-writes are often involved in the development stage.)

**development hell:** a long period during which a film or other project is "trapped" in development.

**dialogue:** the façade of heard language that reveals the subtextual struggles going on between characters.

**dimensionality:** richness of atmosphere or texture added to a film by means of smaller elements such as supporting characters, background actions or dialogue, or small details of design.

**director:** the main orchestrator of the various creative activities that go into film production, the director collaborates with and guides designers, editors, cinematographers, technicians, and actors in their interpretation of the script within a single organic vision.

**distributor:** the entity or company who distributes a completed film to exhibitors.

**dolly:** a camera support with wheels or running track, to provide smoother movement.

**dramatic action:** the subtextual undercurrents and reciprocal actions that occur beneath the dialogue and physical actions of a screenplay.

**dramatic need:** what the main character pursues during the screenplay and drives him/her forward through the action.

**DSLR (digital single-lens reflex camera):** a digital still image camera that combines parts of a single-lens reflex camera (SLR) and a digital camera back, replacing film. The cameras are popular among professional still photographers as well as consumers who appreciate their large depth of field

and ability to control features like ISO. DSLR cameras allow for live previewing of photos and HD recording of videos.

## E

**editor:** the technician who “cuts” and assembles a movie from raw footage shot during principal photography, cutting it into a completed film with an eye to pacing, rhythm, suspense and cinematic image storytelling.

**editing techniques:** 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.
- **crosscutting:** cut to action that is happening simultaneously; also called parallel editing.
- **flashback:** interruption of the linear narrative caused by a movement into events that occurred previously, often signified by a change in music, voice-over narration, or dissolve; a “flash forward” leads us ahead in time.
- **eye-line match:** a shot of a person looking, then a cut to what he/she saw, followed by a cut back for a reaction.

**elements:** the smaller parts of a movie that must be written and noted during the breakdown and budgeting process (e.g., cast, set pieces, vehicles, music, etc.).

**environmental facts:** the geographical location, time of year, season, day, period of history, and economic, political, social, moral, or religious environment of the special world of the screenplay.

**estimator:** an accountant or production manager who estimates the cost of making a movie from a screenplay.

**exposition:** the revelation of previous action to a story (or earlier action in a script) that must be imbued with present dramatic action and an intimation of a future development.

**exposure:** refers to the amount of light allowed to enter the DSLR sensor (or any imaging surface).

## F

**feature film:** a movie usually anywhere between 75 to 200+ minutes in length.

**film language:** all the techniques filmmakers use to tell a story on the screen — including camera distance, angle, and movement; editing; and sound.

**filmmaking:** the act of recording a performance on film

**filter:** either a piece of glass or plastic that goes over the lens and changes the color and/or the amount of light reaching the film or sensor. Software filters serve a similar function but after shooting.

**flashback:** a transition from a scene to one that has taken place prior to it.

**focus:** adjustment of the elements in a lens so that an image is viewed the way the director wants.

- **soft focus:** when a director intentionally puts his/her object slightly out of focus to make the image look softer or unclear.
- **rack focus:** when a director shifts the focus from one object to another in the same shot in order to direct the audience's attention.
- **deep focus:** when the foreground and the background are equally in focus.

**foreshadowing:** a metaphoric or symbolic indication of something to come.

**format:** the specific layout, typeface, point size, and punctuation required by the film industry for professional screenplays.

**framing (shots):**

- **long shot (LS):** a shot taken from some distance; shows the full subject and perhaps the surrounding scene as well.
- **establishing shot (ES):** sets the scene or shows the space of a scene; often a long shot or series of shots.
- **close-up (CS):** the image being shot takes up at least 80% of the frame. There is also the extreme close-up (ECS) that would show one part of the body or a portion of an object.
- **medium shot (MS):** in between LS and CS; people are usually seen from the waist up.

## G

**gaffer:** person responsible for managing lighting including associated resources such as labor and electrical.

**genre:** a type of film for which audience have a set of particular expectations in regard to plot, style, tone, outcome, and theme.

**given circumstances:** the environmental facts, previous action, and polar attitudes of a dramatic story.

**greenlight:** formal approval of a film's production finance, thereby allowing the project to move forward from the development phase to pre-production and principal photography.

**grip:** person who manage cables, position lighting fixtures and install dolly tracks.

**guerrilla filmmaking:** refers to making films without getting authorized permission to use locations.

## H

**hook:** see plot point.

## I

**internet movie database (IMDb):** an online database of information related to films. This includes actors, production crew personnel, and fictional characters featured in all visual entertainment media. Since 2008, a feature also enables U.S. users to instantly view over 6,000 movies and television shows from CBS, Sony and various independent film makers.

**independents:** rebel filmmakers and film distributors and exhibitors who declined to join or were refused into the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) or "Edison Trust".

**intent:** the subtextual objective of a character

## J

**jeopardy:** a condition of possible physical or emotional danger or suffering of a character or characters that raises the stakes of a plot.

**jib:** see *crane*.

## K

**kelvin:** a measuring system used for color temperature.

**keyframes:** a frame used to show the extreme part of a movement in animation.

## L

**legend:** written information superimposed on an image or blank screen (e.g., "Long ago, in a galaxy far away...")

**lighting:**

- **low-key:** scene is flooded with shadows and darkness; creates suspense/suspicion.
- **high-key:** scene is flooded with light; creates bright and open-looking scenes
- **neutral:** neither bright nor dark-even lighting throughout the shot.

- **bottom/side:** direct lighting from below or from one side; often dangerous or evil-looking, may convey split personality or moral ambiguity.
- **front/rear:** soft, direct lighting on face or back of subject- may suggest innocence, create a "halo" effect.

**linear structure:** a plot structure that runs in a chronological or logical cause-and-effect sequence.

**location manager:** a film crew worker who scouts, contracts, and manages the location sets (as opposed to studio sets) for film productions. Locations are usually real places used as found sets with a minimum of set dressing or construction.

**log line:** an extremely short description of the plot, characters, theme, and genre of a screenplay used to pitch or synopsis scripts during the development stage.

## M

**marketing director:** the project manager in charge of determining how best to promote and distribute a movie to the public.

**mentor character:** a character that helps a protagonist in achieving his or her objective; often, they serve as catalysts and may also articulate the theme of the story.

**method, the:** The school of method acting is a family of techniques used by actors to create in themselves the thoughts and feelings of their characters, so as to develop lifelike performances. Though not all method actors use the same approach, the "method" in method acting usually refers to the practice, influenced by Konstantin Stanislavski and created by Lee Strasberg, in which actors draw upon their own emotions and memories in their portrayals, aided by a set of exercises and practices including sense memory and affective memory. Method acting shares similarities with Stanislavski's system.

**midpoint scene:** a plot point that seems to divide the second act of a story in half, usually serving to emphasize or articulate the larger theme or message of the story.

**mise-en-scène:** refers to what appears within the frame of the shot, including the costumes, props, acting, lighting, and makeup.

**montage:** a sequence of images or short scenes that reveal story points or important exposition in an encapsulated manner.

**motif:** a recurring image, sound, line, action or other element that makes a symbolic, allegorical, metaphoric or thematic point in a movie.

**motivation:** a) the situation, reasoning, or driving compulsion behind a character's intent; b) the character background or situational factors that actors analyze to "motivate" their performance of a role.

**movie:** a dramatic performance that is recorded as a moving image, whether on film or videotape.

**myth:** a story that has been told and re-told for centuries and which seems rooted in universal human experiences that people want to re-experience in new forms again and again (your textbook describes myths as stories that are "more than true").

**mythic element:** a story element that seems taken from myth (such as the comeuppance of a bad character in a classic cautionary tale or the theme of sacrifice in tragic love stories).

## N

**niche studio styles:** refers to the distinctive film styles and film genres considered to be staples of a particular Hollywood movie studio during the Golden Age. (e.g. Paramount excelled in comedy, while Warner Bros. developed a reputation for gritty social realism.)

## O

**objective:** the goal or desire of a protagonist(s).

**obstacle:** a barrier or reversal that presents a challenge to a protagonist's achievement of an objective.

**omniscient (omniscience):** storytelling that is told from an all-knowing, all-seeing point of view.

**one-line description:** a very brief one-sentence description of what happens in a scene.

**organic structure:** a writing structure in which all of story elements relate to one another and to the whole in a complete and unified manner so as to make overall emotional or thematic sense to the reader or audience.

**out of continuity:** out of chronological or linear order (used to describe the way in which movie scenes are shot during principal photography).

**outcome:** the resolution of a story in terms of the protagonist's objective.

**outtakes:** takes that are discarded, usually because of acting mistakes technical errors.

## P

**pace:** the intensity, rhythm or speed (or lack thereof) of a story's plot action.

**page count:** the number of eighths of a page of script content that takes place in one setting, used to calculate the amount of time it will take to shoot a script.

**paradigm:** a model, example, or conceptual scheme. In screenplay writing it refers to the conceptual structure it follows.

**parenthetical:** one or two words that qualify the tone of a dialogue line when it is not clear from the subtext or context of the line how it should be played; a parenthetical is placed in parentheses just above the dialogue line and indented.

**period:** an historical time and place that serves as the setting or “special world” of a screenplay story.

**pitch:** a brief verbal description of a screenplay idea or script (often based on a written logline) usually told by a writer, director, or producer to someone who is interested in buying, financing, or developing a story idea or script.

**plot action:** the physical actions and story points that propel a story through to a climax and resolution.

**plot pay-off:** the consequence or outcome of a plot point or story element that is set-up earlier in a screenplay.

**plot point (or action point or “hook”):** a significant or overt action or moment within a plot that creates obstacles, raises the stakes, articulates theme, or complicates things for a protagonist trying to reach an objective.

**point of view (POV):** the position from which an image is supposed to be seen, requiring the placing of the camera in that relationship (e.g., “Benjamin’s POV through the swim goggles as he walks toward the pool” would require the camera operator to shoot through swim goggles as the camera is dollied [pushed on a camera dolly] toward a pool.)

**polar attitude:** a character’s emotional attitude or approach to other characters, to his/her situation, to society, or to him or herself.

**post production:** the phase of production that follows principal photography, in which raw footage is cut and assembled into a finished movie with added soundtrack and visual effects.

**pre production:** the process of preparing all the elements involved in a film that formally begins once a project has been greenlit. Once financial backing has been secured casting, location scouting, the building of sets and script polishing take place.

**production:** This is the stage at which all the filming is carried out. All scenes planned out in pre-production are filmed at the relevant locations. Each scene is filmed as many times as the director deems fit, to ensure the best quality scenes will be used to construct the film.

**present action:** action that takes place in the present moment as opposed to backstory.

**previous action (back-story):** action that has taken place prior to the opening of the movie, which the audience must know in order to understand the storyline and motivations of the character.

**principal photography:** the phase of production in which all of the moving images are photographed and recorded according to the instructions of the screenplay in preparation for later editorial cutting and assembly.

**production manager:** the main supervisor of the crew in charge of keeping a film project on time and on budget; the PM negotiates all financial and contractual affairs for the project during pre-production, principal photography, and sometimes post production.

**protagonist:** the main character whom the audience identifies with or cares about in a story. He/she has to solve the story's conflict.

**prop:** any item included in a movie shot; from a piece of furniture to equipment used by an actor.

## Q

**quality:** the tone or characteristic nature of a story element

## R

**reciprocal action:** dramatic action that entails a subtextual struggle for control or mastery between two or more characters in a scene.

**red herring:** a false lead, assumed outcome or obvious solution that a writer plants in a story to fool the audience from guessing the real outcome.

**relationship web:** the complex network of relationships emanating from the protagonist(s) and relating him/her to the significant or supporting characters within a story.

**resolution:** the outcome of a screenplay in terms of its plot set-up and development.

**reversal:** a serious second act obstacle to a protagonist's objective

**rhythm:** the quality of the pacing and speed of a script's plot action and scene sequences.

**rottentomatoes.com:** a website devoted to reviews, information, and news of films, widely known as a film review aggregator. Its name derives from the cliché of audiences throwing rotten tomatoes or vegetables at a poor stage performance.

**rough cut:** the very first edit of a film. It puts all the elements "roughly" in the right order.

## S

**scene:** continuous action with or without dialogue that takes place in one setting

**scene heading (or slug line):** basic set description at the top of a script scene, written in all caps, providing information as to whether the scene is interior vs. exterior, day or night, and where it takes place (e.g., INT. THE BADDA BING CLUB – DAY)

**screenplay:** A document text in a specific format which contains the dramatic elements of the film, as well as indications of other elements such as setting, light values, action, and, in general, everything which it is essential to see on the screen from the point of view of the whole narrative; in its relationship to the completed film.

**script:** A general term for a written work detailing story, setting, and dialogue. A script may take the form of a screenplay, shooting script, lined script, continuity script, or a spec script.

- **A spec script**, also known as a speculative screenplay, is an unsolicited screenplay. It is usually written by a screenwriter who hopes to have the script optioned and eventually purchased by a producer, production company, or studio.
- **A shooting script** is the version of a screenplay used during the production of a motion picture. Shooting scripts are distinct from spec scripts in that they make use of scene numbers, and they follow a well defined set of procedures specifying how script revisions should be implemented and circulated.
- In the script supervisor's **lined script** used during shooting, he draws a vertical line down the page for each different camera setup. Each line designates the start and stop of that setup, a quick note of what the shot description was and whether or not the dialogue was on camera for that setup. This allows the editor to quickly reference which camera setups cover which portion of the dialogue or action.
- **A continuity script** is a script giving the complete action, scenes, etc., in detail and in the order in which they are shown on the screen. It also includes other features, such as sound effects, actors' accents, emotions, and others. Captioning agencies require a continuity script so that captioners don't miss important dialogue or effects.

**script breakdown:** a) an analysis of a screenplay in which all of the production elements are reduced to lists in order to schedule and budget the production; b) a director's creative analysis of the dramatic action, reciprocal struggle, theme, and design elements of a screenplay.

**set:** wherever camera is in place for a shot that is being set up for shooting (or being shot) at a location or studio.

**setting:** the place in which a scene happens (not to be confused with location or set)

**set-up:** the premise or given circumstances laid out at the beginning of a story, just before the catalyst propels the story into its development and resolution.

**shooting schedule:** a principal photography production schedule created by a production manager and assistant director to organize the shooting of scenes out-of-continuity in the most economical and time-saving way possible.

**shot list:** the list of shots to be completed for a film, usually broken down into a daily schedule.

**simultaneity:** the quality of having two or more things happening at once

**slug line (or scene heading):** basic set description at the top of a script scene, written in all caps, providing information as to whether the scene is interior vs. exterior, day or night, and where it takes place (e.g., EXT. THE SOPRANO DINING ROOM - NIGHT)

**sound:**

- **diegetic sound:** sound that could be heard logically by the characters within the film; sound can also be internal diegetic, meaning that the sound can be heard only within the mind of one character.
- **nondiegetic sound:** sound that could not be heard by characters; sound given directly to the audience by the director.

**soundtrack:** audio part of a movie containing the dialogue, sound effects, and music

**step outline:** a plot outline used by writers to help organize and visualize their story before writing it; a step outline consists of scene headings followed by brief one-line descriptions in sequential order.

**stock character:** an archetypal character that shows up again and again in story throughout the ages, fulfilling a universal purpose (such as a mentor character or comic foil to the protagonist)

**storyboard:** graphic organizers in the form of illustrations or images displayed in sequence for the purpose of pre-visualizing a film. They look very much like comic books.

**storytelling:** human communication that springs from a fundamental desire in people to tell each other what happened through the most expressive and immediate means possible; in dramatic storytelling, the recreation of events and people are portrayed through present action visual and oral performance.

**subplot:** a secondary plot line that enhances a main plot and intersects with it at a crucial point in the climax.

**subtext:** the undercurrent of emotions and polar attitude shifts that lie beneath physical action and between the lines of dialogue.

**subtextual struggle:** the reciprocal action of a scene's dramatic subtext, in which two or more characters struggle for mastery or control of the moment.

**supporting character:** a subplot character or minor character who helps to raise the stakes for the main protagonist, or who reflects the same problems or issues of the protagonist, while providing texture or dimensionality to the setting.

**suspense:** a state of excitement or apprehension created by the pacing and sequencing of scenes, through the raising of a protagonist's emotional or physical stakes, or through the creation of jeopardy situations for a protagonist.

## T

**talkie:** talking picture. Original slang term for movies with a soundtrack. The first feature film with a soundtrack was The Jazz Singer.

**technician:** a crew person who performs some kind of technical (as opposed to design) function (such as grips, gaffers, sound mixers, boom operators, script supervisors, etc.)

**teleplay:** a form of dramatic literature used as an instruction manual for the production of television shows.

**texture:** a characteristic visual or tactile quality produced by certain kinds of images (such as a story that has many scenes that take place in the rain or which incorporates images drenched in rain to produce a cold and "damp" feeling in the viewer).

**thematic thread:** a metaphoric element, literary or cinematic device used within a film to weave an underlying message or theme throughout the story.

**theme:** an underlying philosophical, social or spiritual message that gives the plot meaning and elevates the story to its essential, universal human ideas.

**three act structure:** the beginning, middle, and end of a story, played out in linear sequence.

**title sequence:** a scene or sequence of scenes over which the title roll of the movie credits are superimposed (usually at or near the beginning of the movie).

**tone:** the attitude toward a subject or story that is being expressed by the writer or director of a screenplay or film (such as cynicism, hope, anger, optimism, sadness, or wonder). The resolution of a story may inform the tone of the piece in the long run, even when a different tone may have been set earlier on.

**transformational arc:** the parabolic shift in polar attitudes of a character from a point A to a point B during the course of a story.

**transition:** a direction in a screenplay that informs the filmmakers as to the quality of the cut from one scene to the next (such as "DISSOLVE TO:"); it appears flush right between the end of one scene and the beginning of the next.

**turning point:** an action point that is a reaction to an obstacle in the way of a protagonist's objective; turning points raise the stakes, move the action in a different direction or to a different playing area, and force the protagonist to take a new or different tack.

## U

**unit:** a beat of reciprocal action or a resolved bit of subtextual struggle within a scene.

**unity:** the way in which the components of a story relate to each other and to the story as a whole so that it makes overall emotional or thematic sense.

**universality:** a quality that transcends the subjective experience of the individual to find the universal reality of human experience.

## V

**videography:** the recording of a performance by means of video camera and videotape.

**visual:** having to do with that which can be seen (vs. heard)

**visual effect:** a special visual technique used to enhance storytelling (such as computer animation, slow motion, or time-lapse photography).

**voiceover narration:** a narration heard over the images of a scene.

## W

**widescreen:** a screen ratio where the width is significantly greater than the height. The ratio of 16:9 has been adopted for high definition televisions. Cinema formats are even wider.

**white balance :** a feature many digital cameras and video cameras use to accurately balance color. It defines what the color white looks like in specific lighting conditions, which also affects the hue of all other colors.