



THINKING FILM
thinking FILM
FILM LANGUAGE

DIRECTION

STORYTELLING

As you have seen, creating a filmic world and telling a story on film is a richly complex audio-visual process. But the way that this story is told is also a critical part of creating that film. When we watch a film we, as the audience, get caught up in the story that it is being told. For ninety minutes or more we follow characters and events that lead to a final conclusion. Just as the world of the film is constructed then so is the story that it tells.

We know that, in basic terms, a **story** will have a beginning, middle and an end. But sometimes we also talk about **plot**. So what is the difference between these two words?

Novelist E.M.Forster had these suggestions:

A story is a series of events recorded in their chronological order.

A plot is a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance.

A story could be just an overview of events in a few sentences that probably misses out all the twists and turns, the depth of characters the clues etc. that help to develop the plot of the story.

For example, you might easily and accurately describe these recent multi-award-winning films as follows:

‘The King’s Speech’ – the King of England has a stutter and he hires someone to help him overcome this.

‘Slumdog Millionaire’ – a young man wins the Indian version of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” and in the process finds the lost love of his life.

These descriptions hardly seem to do justice to all the craft and art that went into making them!



THINKING FILM

thinking FILM

FILM LANGUAGE

ACTIVITY

Think of a film that you have seen recently. Write down the story as quickly as you can. Then think of all the things that you have 'missed out'.

Whilst a story has a beginning, middle and an end, developing this into a plot to tell the story on film might need to change the order of events to keep the audience interested. Flashbacks, for example, can show events that happened before the beginning of the story. The plot of a film is therefore that structuring of the elements that will best tell a story to a viewer/reader. Plotting a filmed story means deciding which events, characters and settings will be seen in the film, what will not be seen, and how these elements will be presented to gain the maximum dramatic effect to engage the viewer.

With the story of the film plotted out, the director starts to make some decisions about how best to represent that story – camera angles, settings, costumes etc – how will they visually represent the dynamic action to lure and audience into a cinematic world and engage with what is happening.

You will already have seen how mise en scène, cinematography, sound and editing all construct the filmic world and contribute to how the audience understands a film. Many people contribute their ideas as to the creation of the cinematic world. It is the film's director who ultimately has responsibility for the way that a filmed story is told, how that story will be communicated to an audience.

The director decides how the written words of a script can be turned into a visual medium and how to construct that story, through the camera to give information to an audience and involve them in the flow of the plot, giving them the information that they need (but not always!) to make sense of what is happening on screen.

The director works with the film crew to fulfill their interpretation of the script – costumes, music and sound, amongst others - to create the filmic world in which the story takes place.