

Anatomy of a scene - A checklist

| What to look for | Things to consider |
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| How does this scene fit into the context of the film? | If you were to see only this part of the film, what do you know so that it makes sense? Is the plot following a chronological order? |
| What happens in this scene? | Tell what happens. Who? What? Where? When? Why? |
| How does it advance the plot? | How do the events of this scene clarify/complicate matters? How does this scene effect / cause future events? How is this scene the result of earlier action? |
| How does it add to characterization? | What new information is revealed or suggested about a character? Is there anything deliberately withheld? |
| Cultural / historical context | What does the audience need to know to understand the cultural / historical context of the film? What does the audience learn about the culture of historical context of the film? |
| Any dramatic irony? | Does the audience learn /know something that the character(s) do(es) not? |
| Diegetic sound | http://www.filmsound.org/terminology/diegetic.htm What is the effect of the sound? How does it add meaning? Who was the sound designer? |
| Non-diegetic sound | What is the effect of the sound? Does it contrast or fit with the diegetic sound? |
| Music | Who wrote the score? Any pre-existing music used? Aaron Copeland describes 5 ways music is used. Which ways are evident in this scene? Find an online interview with the composer. |
| Lighting /shadow | Does it create mood? Are all character lit the same? Is there movement between light and shadow? High key / low key |
| Camera choice | Handheld? Steadicam? Tracking? Crane? What's the purpose of the choice? |
| Camera movement | Name the camera movements? Are they used to add meaning? |
| Camera angles | Name the angles? High or low angles? Are they used to add meaning? Are different angles used for different effects? |
| Camera lens | Anything unusual? Wide-angle? Deep focus? |
| Depth of focus | What is included /excluded by depth of field? How |

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| | does it related to earlier/later similar scenes? HAL |
| Editing | Long or short edits. Cuts, dissolves or fades? What's the effect of the choice? Is the editing intended to join or separate? |
| Juxtaposition | Is this scene placed before/ after another scene for specific effect? |
| Proximetrics | Where are characters place in relation to each other? What is revealed? |
| Parallelism | Does this scene mirror or contrast with something else in the movie? Any foreshadowing? Has this scene been foreshadowed? |
| Dialogue | Anything unusual? Word choice? Delivery? Accents? Repetition? |
| Shot / Reverse shot | Does the director use Shot / Reverse shot Are they shared equally? Is the revere shot delayed? Why? |
| Tracking shots | Any tracking shots? Lateral? Following? Reversing? Accompanied by character movement? No character movement? How does it show the relationship between the character and place/other characters? |
| Mise-en-scène | Who was the art director? Look for everything the art director has placed in the scene? Justify his/her choices? Watch for pictures or photos? What's playing on the TV or radio? Books on the shelf? Stuffed birds??? Mirrors? |
| Props | Anything interesting about props? Watch? Glasses? Hat? Gun? Suitcase? |
| Costume | What can you tell about the character from his or her clothing? Who was the costume designer? |
| Use of cinematic space | Placement of people and objects on the screen? Sharing cinematic space? Encroaching on another's space? Watch for space being used to portray relationship / changes in relationships. |
| Framing | Watch for windows, doors, parallel lines that frame people or objects. Entrapment. |
| Allusions Inter-textual links | References to history, other movies, songs, religion, literature. |
| Recurring motif | For example: Eyes in Blade Runner and Minority Report; water and metal in Donnie Darko; Circles in Behind the Sun and Strangers on a Train |
| Colors | Warm /cool colors? Color as characterization. Color as symbolism. Color to suggest mood. Color as foreshadowing. Contrasting colours (the monolith v white room) |

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| Types of shots | Close-ups? Long shots? ECUs? Does it cut from long shot to CU? What is the effect? |
| Critical reaction to the film | Find four reviews of the film from respected sources. Two must be from the time of its original release. Record the details: reviewers' names and publication names/dates |
| Political reaction to the film | Was the film controversial in any way? Details? |
| Generic characteristics | Where does this film fit in terms of film genre and film history? Is it influenced by earlier films? Is it an influential film? Does it subvert the genre or follow it? |
| Director's oeuvre | Where does this fit into the director's career? Any awards for this film? |