

5. Discuss the use of editing in the opening scene. Give reference to the pace and rhythm created through shot selection and editing.

The highly creative use of editing is evident in the opening scene of *Falling Down* which effectively communicates our central characters growing anxiety whilst gridlocked on a Santa Monica Freeway, and provides several references, motifs and casual relationships with the state of American society during the 1990s.

The scene commences with one continuous tracking shot establishing the relationship between the central character and the congested freeway. An extreme close up reveals sweat on his top lip indicating the central characters anxiety. The audience then engage in following the slow tracking movement of the camera which reveals the congested freeway, a young girl in the car ahead staring blankly at him, children squealing from a school bus draped with the American flag, angry motorists on mobile phones. The first cut of this opening is of him from the front, of a medium shot, slapping a fly (we know this from the diegetic, buzzing sound), which represents his broken irritation. As well as this, his knuckles have clearly tightened around the steering wheel, hinting he may be able to break at any moment - relating to the plot of the movie

From this point you should identify the building rhythm of the editing as the cuts accelerate to reflect Foster's growing tension-

For more information on editing terminology read the following

Editing Glossary



The editing process is very important in film narrative to help create the style, rhythm and mood of the film. At its simplest level editing is the process where camera shots are joined together to tell a story.

Editing organises a film into a whole by uniting footage, rhythmically and aesthetically to create meaning through establishing space and relationships between shots

Editing serves to unite shots in four ways

1. Vision: so that when shots are joined they match in terms of colour and composition.

2. Rhythm: so that audiences can perceive the pattern of a narrative and understand what to expect of it
3. Space: So that can understand where each shot is located within a scene and where each scene is in the world of the story
4. Time so that audiences understand where the shot is in terms of the development of the storyline

The film editor must know how to tell a story, be politically savvy when working with directors and studio executives, and have a calm and confident demeanour. Millions of dollars of film and the responsibility of guiding the picture through post-production and into theatres rest in the editor's hands. Scenes may have been photographed poorly and performances might have been less than inspired, but a skilled and creative editor can assemble the film so that the audience will never see these imperfections.

To better understand the editing process, imagine you are seated in a movie theatre. The lights are dim and credits appear over an establishing shot of a seacoast town in Maine. The title appears on the screen: Blueberry Hill. After the last credits evaporate, you see a long shot of a vacant summer cottage, then a medium shot of a mysterious-looking man pouring lighter fluid on the grass near the house and striking a match. The grass catches fire; the man flees. The vivid crackling of the fire dissolves into the sound of a young girl's laughter as she packs clothing into a cardboard box and sings along with her CD player.

Who created this scene? The screenwriter, director, cinematographer, actors, lighting designer, sound designer, and, finally, the film editor. Working with the director, the film editor shaped the scene into its final form. After hours and hours of reviewing the unedited film, he created this one-minute scene. The scene appears to take place in a seacoast town in Maine during an autumn afternoon. In truth, little of what the audience sees on screen occurred in Maine, and it certainly was not all filmed in one afternoon.

The actor who played the mysterious man was most likely filmed on a Hollywood set in late summer. The young girl was filmed on a different set in early fall. The establishing shot of the seaside town was filmed months earlier in California, not Maine. The song on the girl's CD and the sounds of the crackling fire were recorded in a studio. But when you see the finished scene, all of the sounds and images work together. They appear to have taken place at one time and in one place. That is the magic of film editing.

Cuts and Transitions: Assembling the Scene

Editors select sounds and images from all the film that has been shot and arrange them to make the movie. They also plan how one shot will best transition to the next. Assembling the opening scene of Blueberry

Hill, the editor might choose to begin with a wide shot of the bay, focusing on the white caps and buoys that dot the water. From the shot of the grass catching fire, the editor might decide to dissolve to the girl packing clothes into a box. There are dozens of possible transitions the editor can choose, each of which will create a different feeling.

Editing often begins as soon as film has been shot. Early scenes are assembled for the producer and director to view. Occasionally, the actors will also view these early scenes. Many directors choose not to show actors these edited scenes for fear that they will affect the actors' performance.

Editing

The work of selecting and joining together shots to create a finished film.

Editing techniques and terms

Cut: A visual transition created in editing in which another instantaneously replaces one shot on screen.

Continuity editing

Editing that creates action that flows smoothly across shots and scenes without jarring visual inconsistencies. Establishes a sense of story for the viewer.

Fade

A visual transition between shots or scenes that appears on screen as a brief interval with no picture. The editor fades one shot to black and then fades in the next. Often used to indicate a change in time and place.

Dissolve

A gradual scene transition. The editor overlaps the end of one shot with the beginning of the next one.

Wipe

Visible on screen as a bar travelling across the frame pushing one shot off and pulling the next shot into place. Rarely used in contemporary film, but common in films from the 1930s and 1940s.

Jump cut

A cut that creates a lack of continuity by leaving out parts of the action.

Action match

The opposite of a jump cut, this cut creates spatial and logic between shots making the action appear smooth.

Eyeline match

The matching of eyelines between two or more characters. For example, if Sam looks to the right in shot A, Jean will look to the left in shot B. This establishes a relationship of proximity and continuity.

Shot reverse shot cutting

Usually used for conversation scenes, this technique alternates between over-the-shoulder shots showing each character speaking.

Cross cutting

Cutting back and forth quickly between two or more lines of action, indicating they are happening simultaneously.

Cutaway

Shot is related but not part of the action

Cut in

Cut to a tighter framing of the action

Superimposition

Addition of text, images or symbols over footage

Manipulation of speed

Altering the speed of action by slowing it down or speeding it up

Montage

Scenes whose emotional impact and visual design are achieved through the editing together of many brief shots. The shower scene from Psycho is an example of montage editing.

Errors of continuity

Disruptions in the flow of a scene, such as a failure to match action or the placement of props across shots.

Establishing shot

A shot, normally taken from a great distance or from a "bird's eye view," that establishes where the action is about to occur.

Final cut

The finished edit of a film, approved by the director and the producer. This is what the audience sees.

Sequence shot

A long take that extends for an entire scene or sequence. It is composed of only one shot with no editing.