Cinematic Techniques

Exploring the visual methods used by filmmakers to achieve a mood of suspense

Cinematic Techniques

- Lighting
- Camera angles
- Other visual methods

Lighting

the illumination of a scene, and the manipulation of light and shadows by the cinematographer
Low-key lighting

- less illumination, more shadows, and many grayish, dark areas

Backlighting

- this phenomenon occurs when the lighting for the shot is directed at the camera from behind the subject(s), causing the figure(s) in the foreground to appear in semidarkness or as silhouettes, or highlighted; with backlighting, the subject is separated from the background.
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Gel

- a transparent, tinted colored sheet of plastic used as a filter for a movie light to create a colored glow over a scene
Unmotivated lighting

Light that seems to come from a source that is neither visible nor implied within the scene

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Camera angles

the point of view or perspective chosen from which to photograph a subject
Long shot

also called a wide shot; a long shot often serves as to establishing locale and setting

Extreme close up

a shot of a part of a character (e.g., face, head, hands) to emphasize detail
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Point-of-view shot

- allows the viewer to look at events from the POV of either a character or the author
Low angle

A shot in which the camera is positioned below the subject, lending the subject a dominating, menacing, or intimidating appearance.

High angle

A shot in which the camera is positioned above the subject, portraying the subject as weak, insignificant, or vulnerable.
**High angle**

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**Dutch tilt**

An extreme angle achieved by tilting the camera off to the side so that the shot is composed with the horizon at an angle to the bottom of the frame
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Zoom shot

A single shot taken with a lens that has a variable focal length, thereby permitting the cinematographer to change the distance between the camera and the object being filmed, and rapidly move from a wide-angle shot to a close up in one continuous movement.
Other visual methods

Bookends

- a term denoting scenes at the beginning and end of a film that complement each other and help tie a film together
Symbol

- an object in a film that stands for an idea beyond itself, for example
  - window or train=freedom
  - a rose=beauty
  - a cross-roads=a decision point, etc.
- the more a symbol is repeated, the greater its significance
Cinematographers make conscious choices regarding lighting, camera angle, visual methods to enhance a mood of suspense and to engage their audience.

Certain visual techniques are especially well suited for creating a sense of unease in the audience.

And we haven’t even considered the role that music and other aural aspects can play!
Works Cited