

Name: _____

THE GODFATHER (1972)
Directed by Francis Ford Coppola

SCENES FOR STUDY

“I believe in America...”/Wedding

The opening words of the film are spoken by Amerigo Bonasera, a man with an Italian accent who has given up on the American legal system and come to Don Vito Corleone for “justice.” We see him from the Don’s perspective, in a single long take, within Vito’s darkened chambers. Notice how each detail—the sepia tones, the venetian blinds, the old-world décor, the Don’s distorted face and muffled voice, his conservative tuxedo with the rosebud lapel—contributes to the mood.

- How would you describe this mood?

- What does this mood imply about the Don?

- What themes are established in this very first scene of the film?

The scene quickly changes to the noisy wedding party just outside, and throughout this opening sequence, we shift back and forth between the Don’s office and the party.

- As this parallel action occurs, what differences do you notice in sound, editing, and cinematography?

Sound	Editing	Cinematography

- Why do you think the scene keeps shifting back and forth between this inner sanctum and the noisy wedding party just outside?

We are introduced to numerous characters in a short amount of time. Take note of how we get insight and information on all of these characters:

Character	Information/insight
Don Vito Corleone	
Tom Hagen	
Sonny Corleone	
Michael Corleone	
Kay Adams	
Fredo Corleone	
Luca Brasi	
Johnny Fontaine	

Khartoum—chapter 4 [32:35-34:35]

- How does the director (Francis Ford Coppola) use the following techniques to both **prepare** and **shock** us (*describe and explain*)?

Music	Sound
Colors	Editing

- What do we dissolve to at the end of this scene?
- Why?

Luca Brasi Sleeps with the Fishes—chapter 6 [40:40-44:10]

Brasi is framed in his bedroom doorway, puts on his bulletproof vest and checks his gun. We then follow him through the gleaming hotel corridor to the bar. Notice the fish etched on the glass and the brown tones of the room. Watch the men's hands and faces as they speak in Sicilian.

- How does Coppola prepare us for Luca Brasi's death (**point to specifics**)?

Michael at the Hospital—chapter 8 [1:01:23-1:08:47]

*We begin to see a new side of Michael when he takes steps to save his father at the hospital. Pay close attention to the **soundtrack, lighting, editing**, and other elements of film.*

- What personal qualities does Michael demonstrate in this scene?
- How does Coppola create suspense and suggest Michael's silent thoughts (point to specifics)?
- Contrast Michael's reflective methods with Sonny's outgoing style in the scenes that follow.

Michael

Sonny

--	--

"How's the Italian food in this restaurant?"—chapter 10 [1:24:00-1:30:00]

- Which parts of the scene do you find most compelling and **why**?
- Immediately before Michael shoots, describe the sound and camera movement:

- What effect does this have?

The Don's Final Moments—chapter 20 [2:30:00-2:33:00]

This scene, in which Vito plays in the garden with his grandson, was entirely improvised, and has an overall different tone than the rest of the film.

- What guided your expectations or surprised you in this scene?
- What do some of the details of the scene (the insecticide gun, orange, garden setting) say about the themes in the film?
- How does this scene seem different from the rest of the film?

Baptism and Murder—chapter 21 [2:36:20-2:43:00]

The crosscutting between the church baptism and the revenge killings is the film's grand finale and one of the most celebrated examples of editing in film history. Notice the use of matching action (like walking up stairs), the priest's voice, music, color and other film elements to link shots.

- Why do you think the editors chose to splice together shots from different locations (parallel editing)?
- What thematic connections are suggested in this sequence?
- What does this sequence tell us about Michael?
- What is ironic about this sequence?
- How do you judge Michael at this point in his life?