

UNIT 36: LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

A: UNDERSTAND HOW LIGHTING CREATES MEANING IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

- The Local TV Network (LTVN) represents the UK local TV channels that have been awarded Ofcom licenses, such as London Live. LTVN have decided to run a series of lighting workshops for media students who are interested in learning more about the role of lighting in photography and moving image products.
- Successful applicants will learn how to safely set up lighting kits, experimenting with different techniques, and they will also be involved in setting up lighting equipment for different media products.
- There are only limited places available on the workshop and as part of the application process, LTVN have asked you to produce a report on how lighting creates meaning in media production.

- You must produce a report exploring how a range of media texts use lighting and the relationship between lighting and genre.
- You must illustrate your report with detailed examples of how lighting creates meaning in media production.
- You must include an evaluation of the following ways to use lighting techniques to create meaning in media products in your report:

- functional purposes of lighting, including lighting people to provide flattering images, lighting to illustrate elements of a background, practicals - onscreen sources of light from within the world of the product, providing contrast to other setups, highlighting products in advertising
- artistic purposes, including low-key lighting, use of shadow, the 'Rembrandt' effect, modelling of light, uplight, spotlighting
- lighting to establish a setting or time of day
- lighting to reflect natural conditions.

- You should also evaluate how the typical lighting setups that have become synonymous with the following genres create meaning across a range of media products:
- film noir, including low-key lighting, use of shadows to frame subjects, shadows from blinds to obscure faces, chiaroscuro lighting
- horror, including use of shadow, atmospheric effects, obscuring of detail to provoke imagination
- music video, including performance-based spotlighting, strobing, lighting to convey mood, lighting to create contrast.

GRADES

Criteria covered by this task:	
Unit/Criteria reference	To achieve the criteria you must show that you are able to:
D1	Evaluate the relationship between lighting and genre in creating meaning across a range of media products, using well-chosen examples.
M1	Analyse the relationship between lighting and genre in creating meaning across a range of media products.
P1	Explain how lighting is used to create meaning in media products.
P2	Explain the relationship between lighting and genre.

LIGHTING IN FILM AND TV

- Create an introduction explaining (in your own words what lighting is) 50-100 words
- What does genre mean in film / tv? Give examples
- How does lighting of characters / props change in these specified genres?

MISE-EN-SCENE



- In the same way that camera angles, audience positioning and sound/music are used for a particular effect, so too is lighting.

MISE-EN-SCENE AND LIGHTING

- Remember that in media texts, lighting is just as important as any other element.
- Everything that you see has been carefully selected and chosen for a reason – to **elicit** a certain response from the audience.
- Your job now is to determine what that effect is, and whether or not it had the desired effect.

Uses of Light

- Illumination
- Mood
- Guide our attention
- Texture and Shape

2 types of shadows

- Attached
- Cast

Attached shadow



Cast shadow

4 Major Features of Filmic Lighting

(From the book Film Art by Bordwell & Thompson)

A. Quality

- 1) Hard – clearly defined shadows/ light and dark areas
- 2) Soft – diffused illumination, soft shadows, indirect or indistinct lighting
- 3) Harsh – extreme differences between light and dark areas, high-contrast image

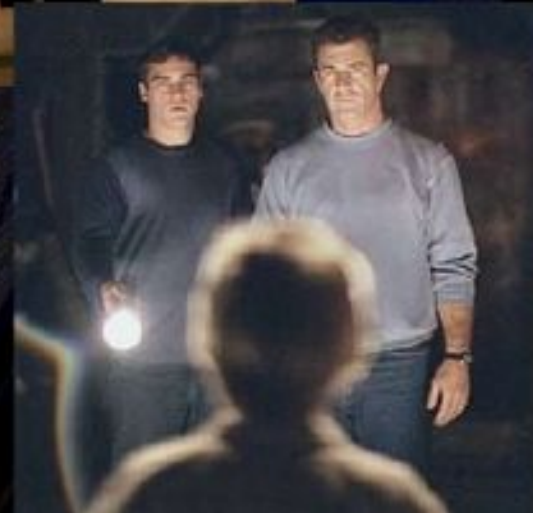


4 Major Features of Filmic Lighting

(From the book Film Art by Bordwell & Thompson)

A. Direction

- 1) Frontal Light
- 2) Side Light
- 3) Back Light
- 4) Under Light
- 5) Top Light



- If the lighting for a shot is wrong, the shot will look dead, people can look washed out, and things become less clear.
- Consider the following types of lighting:

1. Natural Lighting

First up, let's look at lights we don't have to move. They move every hour of the day. Natural film lighting techniques are defined by utilizing the light that is already available at whatever location you choose. Most times, you head out on a location scout before you shoot and have that information. You also should think about the time of day you're at those locations.

Natural lighting summary

- Use bounce cards or flags to alter natural light
- Make sure you do a location scout
- Take time of day into account



3. High Key Lighting

The definition of high key lighting is a style of lighting for film, television, or photography that reduces the lighting ratio in the scene. In the first days of film, this was done to deal with high contrast, but now it's used by filmmakers to adjust the mood and tone of a scene.

High key lighting summary:

- Dominated by white tones from bright lights
- Minimal use of blacks and mid-range tones
- Tone can be optimistic or hopeful
- Used in a lot of pop music video lighting setups



4. Low Key Lighting

What is Low Key Lighting? The definition of low key lighting is a filmic lighting style that uses a hard source to encase your scene in shadow. Low key lighting wants contrast and blackness.

Low key lighting summary:

- Dark tones, blacks, shadows
- Striking contrast images
- Used in noir or thrillers for ominous warnings



Expressive lighting (predominately **low key.**)

High contrast and shadow to convey a dark expressive mood.

Subjects are sometimes back lit only to create a silhouetted figure.

May also involve the use of single hue 'gels', filters and other optical effects to create a specific mood.

13. Ambient Light

Unless you're shooting in a pitch black night or an artificial space, there will always be some sunlight or lamplight or overhead light that seeps in. This light that's present is known as ambient light. You need to account for ambient light, especially when shooting outside or near windows. As the time of day changes, ambient light changes, so think about that when shooting one scene over a long period of time.

Ambient lighting summary:

- Always take into account the time of day
- Refers to light that leaks into frame

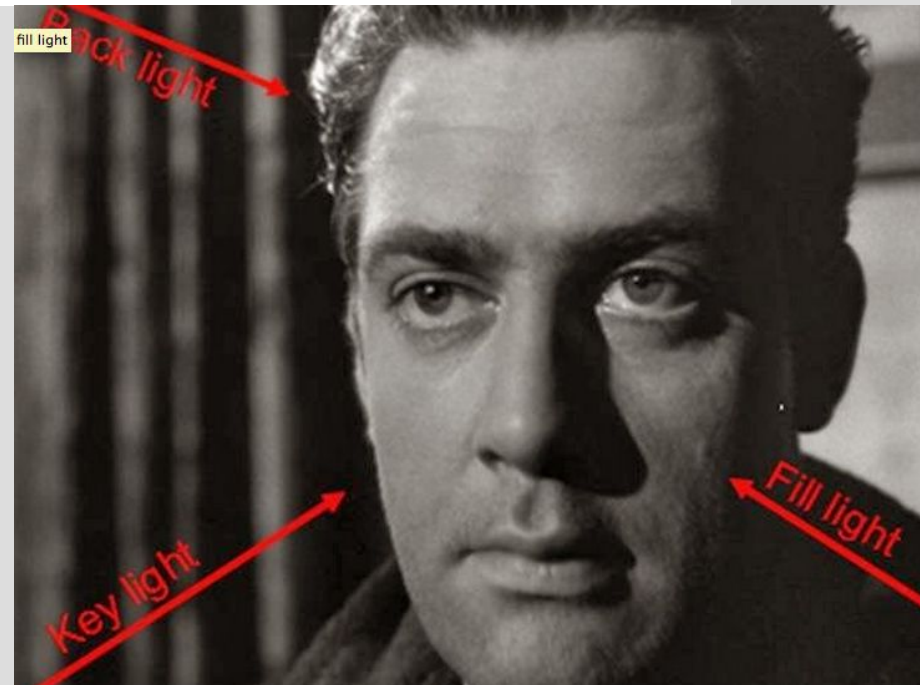


4. Fill Lighting

What is a Fill Light? A fill light cancels out the shadows created by the key light. A fill light is placed on the opposite of the key light, and usually not as powerful as the key.

Fill Light Summary:

- Remove shadows created by the key,
- Does not create shadows or it's own characteristics.



5. Backlighting

What is Backlight? A backlight hits an actor or object from behind. It is placed higher than the object it is lighting. Backlights are used to separate an object or an actor from a background. They give more shape and depth. Backlights help the frame feel three-dimensional.

Backlight Summary:

- The sun is a great backlight - you can use a reflector or bounce the sun at a lesser intensity back the subject.
- If a backlight is placed behind an actor at an angle, the backlight is called a "*kicker*."



6. Practical Light

What if you want to use light sources within a location? Things like lamps, candles, or even the television set? We call those things practical lights. Most of these accouterments are added to the set to light corners or faces by set designers anyone from the lighting crew to help the ambiance.

Practical light summary:

- Consider multiple practical lights to help illuminate a subject
- Keep a count of available outlets in every location
- Make sure [color temperatures match](#)



7. Hard Lighting

Hard light is a harsh sourcing of light that can be created with a direct beam from a light source or from the sunlight. This kind of lighting creates shadows and harsh lines. You can use it to draw attention anywhere in the frame, especially on the subject. It can also create silhouettes and highlights.

Hard lighting summary:

- Can be stopped with [diffusers or flags](#)
- Will highlight anything in the frame
- Great for shadows



8. Soft Light

This one is tricky. Soft lighting is not a strict definition of a light source. Soft lighting is an aesthetic used by cinematographers **soft light** to eliminate shadows and to recreate subtle shades of light from exterior sources.

Soft lighting summary:

- It can be used as a fill light
- It can add youth to a subject's face
- Gives the illusion of coming from practical sources



10. Side Lighting or Chiaroscuro Lighting

Much like the name, side lighting refers to light that enters the frame from the side to highlight a person or object. These parallel lights provide a faint fill. They're often used to provide drama and mood to a scene, particularly in the genre of [film noir](#). Many people refer to side lighting as "chiaroscuro" lighting as well. To achieve chiaroscuro lighting, you need a strong contrast and low-key to accentuate the contours of your subject. If your side light is used to fill a scene you may need to bounce it or deal with high-key effects.

Side lighting summary:

- Used to highlight a person or object
- Can possibly provide harsh shadows if not diffused
- Can help in contrast



TASK

- Consider the following clips. For each one, record how lighting was used for effect.

Clip 1

Clip 2

Clip 3

TASK

- Use the following clip to write a detailed review of the scene. Be sure to write in paragraph form, and make particular reference to how lighting is used for effect.
- [Final clip for analysis](#)

Extention

- How does lighting work to enhance scenes within a film?
- Can specific genres be said to have conventional lighting effects?

Task 2

B.D2

Explore lighting equipment and setups creatively and confidently for different purposes.

B.M2

Explore equipment and lighting setup effectively for different purposes.

B.P3

Explore the equipment used in creating lighting for media products.

B.P4

Explore lighting setup for different purposes.

Task 3

C.D3

Plan and set up effective and creative lighting for a range of different media products.

C.M3

Plan and set up lighting equipment effectively for a given purpose.

C.P5

Plan the requirements of a lighting setup for a particular scene in a media product.

C.P6

Set up lighting equipment competently for a given purpose.