Course Companion

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Film · SL

Every topic handout in one volume

exercises.lol

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Reading film

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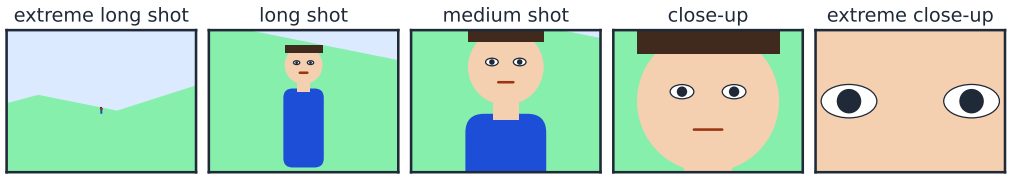
IB Diploma Programme Film SL (first assessment 2019; 2017 guide). This topic equips the TEXTUAL ANALYSIS – the externally assessed task (30% at SL): a written analysis of a prescribed film text based on a chosen extract of at most 5 minutes, with a list of all sources, maximum 1 750 words. The craft this topic teaches is READING FILM: the systematic use of FILM LANGUAGE to explain how an extract's elements create meaning and effect in context. The worked examples analyse imagined extracts, with all findings original.

Must-know for the textual analysis:

Family	Content
film language	mise-en-scène, cinematography techniques, editing, sound
meaning	denotation to connotation: how elements construct theme and character
context	the film's world: production, historical, cultural, generic
extract	the chosen 5 minutes: justified, focal, analysable
document	1 750 words: context, element-by-element analysis, significance

Film language: the four systems

Film analysis names what the screen does. **Mise-en-scène** is everything in the frame: setting and props (location as statement), costume and make-up (character before speech), lighting (key high or low, direction, colour) and staging (blocking and movement within the shot). **Cinematography** is the frame itself: shot size (extreme close-up to extreme long shot), angle (low empowers, high diminishes), lens and depth of field, camera MOVEMENT (the pan that surveys, the dolly that travels, the handheld that panics) and composition (symmetry, rule of thirds, foreground weighting). **Editing** is the join: shot duration (the long take that holds against the montage that compresses), transitions (the cut against the dissolve that passes time), CONTINUITY (match-on-action, the 180-degree line) and MONTAGE (collision cutting that creates a third meaning). **Sound** is the unseen layer: diegetic (inside the story world) against non-diegetic (the score that tells the audience how to feel), dialogue, silence and the sound bridge that stitches scenes.



Shot sizes: the same figure framed from extreme long shot to extreme close-up

The analytical move is always DENOTATION to CONNOTATION to SIGNIFICANCE: describe the element precisely (a low-angle medium shot), read its connotation (the subject towers), then connect to meaning in THIS extract and film (power that the narrative will strip away). An analysis that names techniques without this chain is a catalogue, not an argument.

Context and the extract

The extract (at most 5 minutes of a PRESCRIBED film, listed in the guide's prescribed list) must be justified and FOCAL: an extract where film language visibly carries the film's central concerns. The analysis sits the extract in CONTEXT: the film's production context (technology, industry, movement), its HISTORICAL moment (what it answers), its CULTURAL world (whose stories, what nation or community) and its GENRE (the conventions it uses, delays or subverts). The prescribed list spans world cinema, so the context work is intercultural: an extract's meaning may rest on the audience a film assumes.

> **Worked example.** An extract from a prescribed neo-realist film: a long take, location light, non-professional faces and direct sound; the connotation chain reads documentary truth (denotation: real street, available light) toward the movement's claim (ordinary lives deserve the screen); the context is post-war reconstruction and a national cinema answering studio escapism; the significance: the film language IS the argument. The essay argues, it does not inventory.

Writing the analysis

The **document** (1 750 words maximum, plus sources) is structured: the extract identified and justified (minutes, what precedes and follows, why these minutes); the context compactly (a paragraph, not a history essay); the ANALYSIS proper, organised by the four systems or by the extract's sequence (each paragraph one element, the denotation–connotation–significance chain completed, always returning to the extract's place in the whole film); and the conclusion (the extract's contribution to the film's meaning). Sources: the film itself (cited properly), the prescribed-list context, any scholarship; a list of all sources, separated primary from secondary. The classic failures: the catalogue (technique names without the chain), the plot summary (what happens instead of how it means), and the review (evaluation instead of analysis).

Worked opening (original). Five sentences that sign the contract: "The extract runs 00:00–01:30 of [film, director, year]. In it, a fixed long take watches the mother cross the empty square: no edit, no score, natural light. The denotation is plain – a woman crosses a street; the connotation is that the city does not see her. By significance, the film's argument about invisibility is made before a word is spoken. Every system is doing this work at once, which is why these minutes earn analysis." Extract named, chain completed, destination stated – the rest of the essay must keep this contract.

Checklist

- The four systems and their vocabularies (film language).
- The denotation–connotation–significance chain in every paragraph (film language).
- The four contexts applied compactly (context).
- The extract focal, justified, at most 5 minutes, prescribed (extract).
- The four-part document; 1 750 words; sources separated; failures avoided (document).
- The worked neo-realist chain as the model; the examiner sees HOW meaning is made (worked, document).
- The opening five sentences – extract named, chain completed, destination stated – as the essay's contract (document).

Boundary notes: the task is marked on the analysis of how the extract makes meaning, in context, at 1 750 words maximum; the prescribed film text changes each session. The worked chain and the worked opening are original.

Comparing films

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IB Diploma Programme Film SL (first assessment 2019; 2017 guide). This topic equips the COMPARATIVE STUDY – the externally assessed task (30% at SL): a recorded MULTIMEDIA presentation of at most 10 minutes comparing two films on ONE chosen focus, with a list of all sources. Film is studied comparatively across the guide's world-cinema scope, so the study's spine is intercultural: two films from different cultural contexts, compared with film language and read through context. This handout teaches the comparative craft. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for the comparative study:

Family	Content
focus	ONE comparison axis, chosen before the films are locked
pairing	two films, different contexts, both serving the focus
method	compare element by element: film language in parallel
context	the films' worlds explain the differences found
presentation	recorded multimedia, at most 10 minutes, with sources

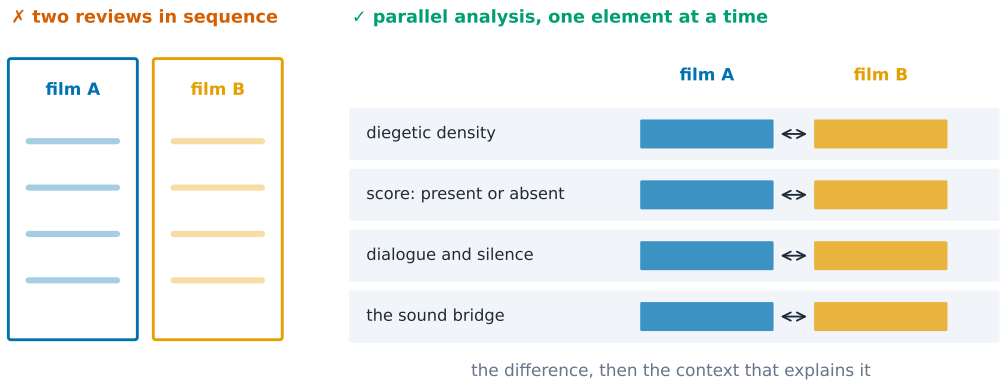
The focus and the pairing

The **focus** is one comparison axis, stated as a question or proposition: not "these two films" but "how two national new waves stage the city" or "how two films use sound to build isolation". The focus comes FIRST because it disciplines the pairing: two films that both illuminate it, from DIFFERENT cultural contexts (the guide's comparative scope), each with film language rich enough on the axis to analyse. The pairing tests: does each film say something the other does not (contrast is the value), and can both be read with the same instruments (film language plus context).

> **Worked example.** Focus: how two films build URBAN ISOLATION with sound. Pairing: a European art-film city drama (sparse dialogue, traffic drone, no score) against an East Asian metropolitan drama (dense room tone, mediated voices through phones and screens). The focus disciplines what is analysed (sound systems) and what is not (stars, genre history beyond need).

The comparative method

Comparison is **parallel analysis**, not two reviews in sequence: choose the focus's elements (for sound: diegetic density, the score's presence or absence, dialogue and silence, the sound bridge), then for each element analyse BOTH films in the same movement – how the European film thins its soundscape to isolate (denotation to connotation, topic 01's chain), how the Asian film crowds its soundscape yet isolates differently. The comparison's finding lives in the CONTRAST and its explanation: the same concern, two film cultures, two solutions – explained by each film's context (movement, industry, audience, moment). The classic failures: the double review (each film summarised, nothing held together), the catalogue (elements listed, focus forgotten) and the theme essay (context talk with no film language).



Compare element by element, both films at once, then let context explain the differences.

> **Worked example, continued.** Element: the score's absence. In the European film silence isolates the protagonist (connotation: the city offers no emotional commentary); in the Asian film the score is replaced by delivered message tones (connotation: connection exists but only as machine sound). The contrast's explanation: two film cultures answering the same modern isolation with different sound worlds – the comparison's finding.

The multimedia presentation

The task is recorded **multimedia**: at most 10 minutes, images and clips as evidence, a spoken comparative argument. Structure: the focus stated in one sentence (with a clip moment from each film as hook); the two films identified (title, director, year, country, and why THIS pairing); the element-by-element comparison (each element: brief clip or still, the chain for each film, the contrast); the contextual explanation (what each film's world accounts for); the conclusion (the finding, owned as one reading). Craft: clips are EVIDENCE (short, cued to the analysed moment), the voice carries the argument (not titles read aloud), and the clock is hard at 10 minutes. The sources list cites both films properly plus any scholarship, primary separated from secondary.

Worked timing (original). Ten minutes spent: 0:00–0:40 the focus sentence, each film's hook clip behind it; 0:40–1:20 the pairing justified (title, director, year, country, why THESE two); 1:20–8:20 the elements, roughly 2:20 each – clip, chain per film,

contrast; 8:20–9:20 the contextual explanation; 9:20–10:00 the finding, owned as one reading. Rehearsed to land at 9:30: against a hard cap, the unrehearsed recording is the one whose final element gets cut by the clock instead of by choice.

Checklist

- The focus first: one axis as question or proposition, before the films are locked (focus).
- The pairing tests: contrast value, same instruments, different cultural contexts (pairing).
- Parallel analysis: element by element, both films in each movement, the chain completed (method).
- The contrast explained by context: each film's world accounts for its solution (context).
- The presentation: focus sentence, pairing, element comparison, context, conclusion; clips as evidence; at most 10 minutes; sources separated (presentation).
- The worked isolation-through-sound comparison understood (worked).
- The ten minutes budgeted to the minute and rehearsed to 9:30 – the cap cuts the unrehearsed (presentation).
- The finding owned as one reading – a comparison argues a relationship between two film worlds, never a verdict of better or worse (presentation).

Boundary notes: the comparative study is marked on the focus's discipline, the film-language evidence and the intercultural explanation: the examiner must hear ONE argument, not two reviews. All worked examples are original; the films referenced are the standard canon, and the timing plan scales to any pairing. A clip over 40 seconds is evidence lost, not evidence shown.

The film portfolio

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IB Diploma Programme Film SL (first assessment 2019; 2017 guide). This topic equips the FILM PORTFOLIO – the internal assessment (40% at SL): portfolio pages (at most 9 pages: three pages per production role) plus a film reel (at most 9 minutes: three minutes per role, including one completed film) and a list of sources. The portfolio is the course's production spine: each student works in THREE production roles, evidencing engagement, process and reflection in each. This handout teaches the roles, the evidence discipline and the reel craft. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for the portfolio:

Family	Content
roles	three chosen from: screenwriting, directing, camera, editing, sound, production design, producing
pages	3 pages per role: intention, process, reflection
reel	3 minutes per role; at most 9 minutes total; one completed film
evidence	drafts, tests, footage: the WORK shown, not claimed
reflection	what the role taught, with the failures kept

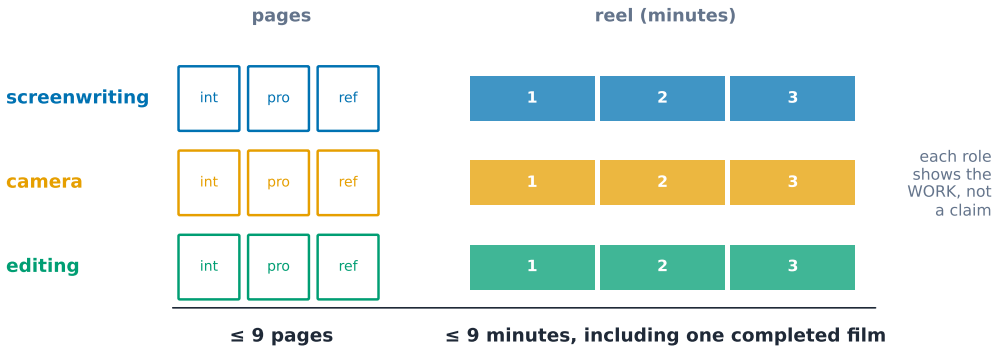
The production roles

The portfolio is built on **production roles** , not finished products alone: the student works in three, chosen to stretch (a writer who has never cut, a camera operator who has never designed sound). The roles: SCREENWRITING (the page: premise, structure, dialogue drafts), DIRECTING (the vision: shot plans, actor notes, the floor), CAMERA (lens, movement, exposure tests), EDITING (the cut: assemblies, rhythm passes, sound sync), SOUND (design, recording, mix), PRODUCTION DESIGN (world: set, costume, props) and PRODUCING (the plan: schedule, logistics, permissions). The choice logic: roles that the course's films actually need, and roles that show RANGE – three pages of the same skill read as one role done thrice.

> **Worked example.** A student takes screenwriting, camera and editing across the course's productions: the page teaches structure by failure (a first draft that will not compress to the shoot window), the camera role teaches restraint (a test reel comparing handheld and locked coverage of the same scene), the edit teaches rhythm (two cuts of one scene, beat against beat).

Evidence and the portfolio pages

The **pages** (at most three per role) are evidence, not claims: the intention (what the role set out to do on THIS production), the process (drafts, test frames, call sheets, before-and-after – the artefact shown), and the reflection (what the role taught, with failures kept visible). The discipline: every claim carries an artefact ("the wide lens isolated the character" is shown with the two trial frames side by side); the reflection names the specific craft lesson, not general growth. The classic failures: the showreel folio (finished clips with no process), the diary (feelings with no craft), and the single-role folio (three pages that are really one role thrice).



Three roles: up to three pages and three minutes of reel each, so nine pages and nine minutes in all.

> **Worked example, continued.** The camera page: intention (cover the confrontation without a single cut-in); process (the two trial frames, the exposure note from the location recce); reflection (the locked wide held tension better than coverage would have, but the second trial's shadow error taught the recce lesson – kept, not hidden).

The film reel

The **reel** (at most 9 minutes total, at most 3 minutes per role, including ONE completed film) shows the work in motion: excerpts chosen per role (a scene the student shot, a sequence they cut), the completed film carrying the longest share. The reel discipline: curation over quantity (three minutes per role is a hard cap, so each excerpt earns its place), the excerpts labelled by role, and the completed film chosen where the student's role is visible. The reel and pages must corroborate: the trial frames on the pages appear as the reel's excerpts.

Worked reel plan (original). Nine minutes: the completed film's key sequence where the student's camera work is legible (3:00, the cap); the chase edit against its beat-mapped timeline (2:30); the screenplay's pages-to-screen moment (2:00); 1:30 for titles, role labels and page-links to the trial frames – every excerpt labelled by role and evidenced on the pages.

Checklist

- The roles: three chosen for range; each role's craft named (roles).
- The pages: intention, process, reflection per role; every claim carrying an artefact (pages).
- The reel: at most 9 minutes, at most 3 per role, one completed film, excerpts labelled (reel).
- Reflections specific to craft, failures kept visible; the three failures avoided (reflection).
- The worked screenwriting-camera-editing portfolio understood (worked).

Boundary notes: the portfolio is marked on role engagement, process evidence and reflective understanding: the examiner must see the work happening. All worked examples are original.