



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA



SCREENING
SHORTS

Mise-en-scène

An Introduction to Screen Language

What is mise-en-scène?

- From the French meaning, literally, “put in the scene”.
- So this involves everything you see in the frame:
 - **colour**
 - **costume (clothing, hair, make-up, accessories, defining marks...)**
 - **set (location, style, furniture, props...)**
 - **lighting**
 - **actor position**
- Mise-en-scène is all about understanding that everything in the frame was deliberately placed there **for a specific reason**.

Mise-en-scène: Colour

- Colour psychologists say there are **12 colours** that affect how we act and feel subconsciously.
- These main hues have specific meanings and uses in art, design, media - and life.
- Studies have shown that 90% of snap judgements are influenced by colour alone.
- This makes colour a powerful tool for filmmakers, allowing them to convey a certain message (about a character or setting, say) **quickly and efficiently**.

Colour Activity: Post-It Beat-It

- Each group will each be given different coloured Post-Its.
- Working together, think of different effects for the colours on the board. (One effect per Post-It.)
- Run up and stick it on the correct row of the table.
- Try to get more Post-Its than any other group!
 - **Doubles within a group will be deducted from your total.**
- You have **3 minutes**.



danger

green

blue

red

white

black

Colour Psychology: Red

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
excitement energy passion courage attention	entertainment food sport fire protection children's products	stimulate create urgency draw attention caution encourage



Colour Psychology: Orange

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
optimistic independent adventurous creativity fun	art entertainment food sports transportation	stimulate communicate fun draw attention express freedom fascinate



Colour Psychology: Yellow

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
enthusiasm opportunity spontaneity happiness positivity	food sports transportation travel leisure	stimulate encourage relaxation awake awareness energise affect mood



Colour Psychology: Light green

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EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
growth harmony fertility kindness dependability	environment leisure alternative energy entertainment education	restore energy promote growth nurture rejuvenate



Colour Psychology: Kelly green

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
safety harmony stability reliability balance	environment banking real estate farming non-profit	relax balance revitalise encourage possess



Colour Psychology: Sky blue

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EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
freedom self-expression trustworthy wisdom joy	entertainment communication children's products technology aerospace	draw attention inspire trust suggest precision communicate consciousness stimulate productivity



Colour Psychology: Royal blue

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
trust responsibility honesty loyalty inner security	security finance technology health care accounting	reduce stress create calmness relax secure create order



Colour Psychology: Violet

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
imagination spirituality compassion sensitivity mystery	humanitarian psychic religion	encourage creativity inspire combine wisdom and power create impression of luxury intuition



Colour Psychology: Pink

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
compassion love immature playful admiration	children's products women's products beauty fashion	communicate energy increase pulse motivate action fascinate encourage creativity



Colour Psychology: Brown

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
reliability stability honesty comfort natural	agriculture construction transportation legal food	stabilise imply common sense suppress emotions create warmth



Colour Psychology: Grey

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
neutral practical conservative formal quiet	all industries mostly used in combination with other colours	create sense of composure depress energy associate timeless communicate maturation



Colour Psychology: Black

EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
power control authority discipline elegance	all industries mostly used in combination with other colours	hide feelings intimidate radiate authority create fear associate with mystery



Colour Activity: Design a Poster

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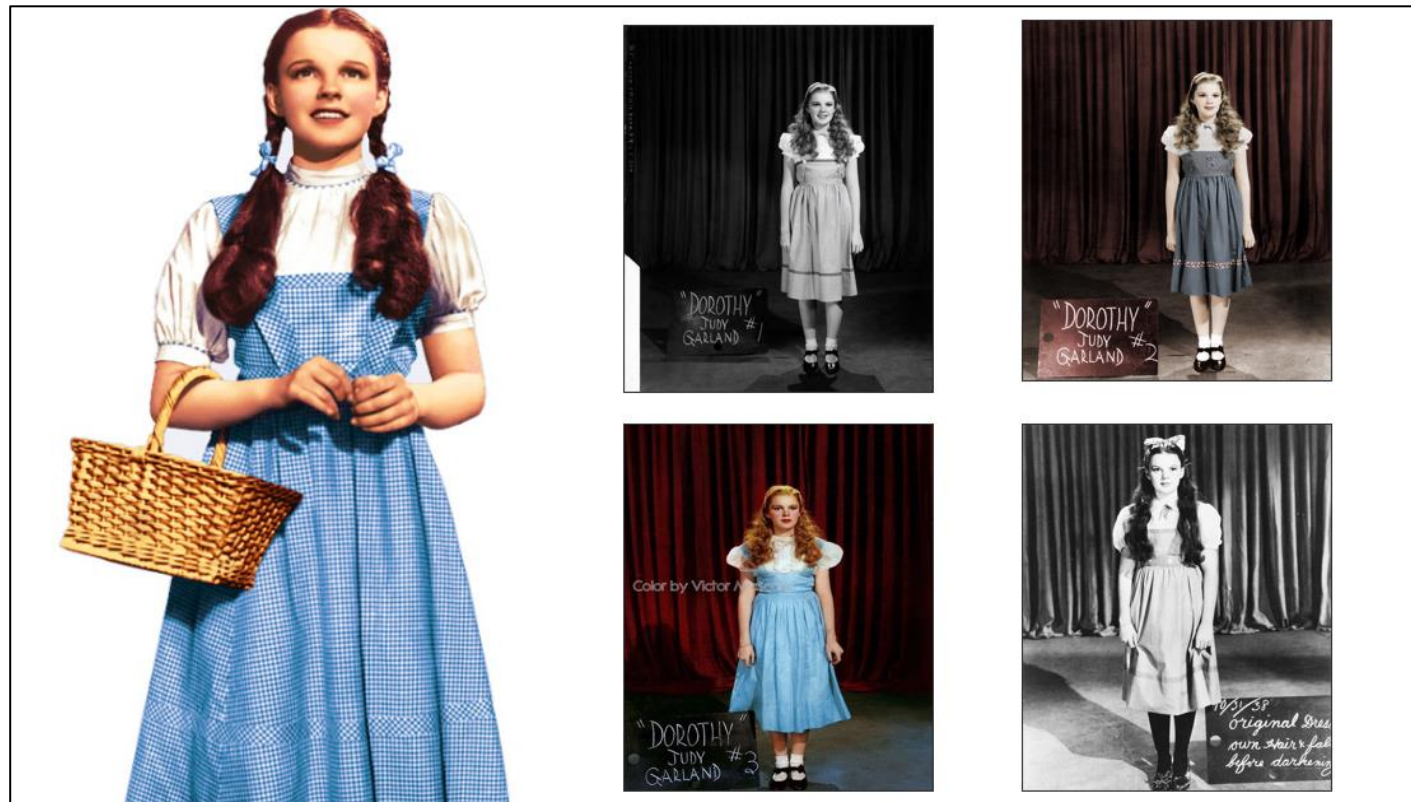


- Using what you've learned about colour psychology, design a film poster or magazine advert making deliberate colour choices.
- Label your design, explaining why you've chosen those colours.



Mise-en-scène: Costume Design

Costumes are chosen very carefully in films. Often, many costumes are designed and tested before the perfect one is chosen...



Costume and First Impressions

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- First impressions happen on average in about **seven seconds**. In this short amount of time, a person might not even have the time to speak!
- This means costumes can tell us all about a character right away and save a lot of storytelling time for a filmmaker.

First impressions are formed as we:

1. Look at the other person's appearance.
2. Look at their body language.
3. Make assumptions about their life.





This character is clearly good as his costume is entirely white - the colour of purity. His white hair and beard makes him look older and therefore wiser, underlined by the pipe he's smoking as we associate pipes with professors. He appears to be wearing robes which could make him a religious or important figure.



This character also seems to be important due to his robes, but because he is entirely in black we assume he is evil. His hair hides his eyes a little, which makes us nervous as it's hard to know what he is thinking.

Costume Activity: Think-Pair-Share

- Each member of the group will be given a different costume to analyse.
- Look closely at every detail of the costume:
clothing **hair** **accessories**
make-up **defining marks** **colours**
- Annotate your picture with ideas about elements of the costume and what they might teach us about the character.
- When the time is up, find the people from other groups who had the same picture. Share your ideas.
- Report back to your group.













Costume Activity: You as Character

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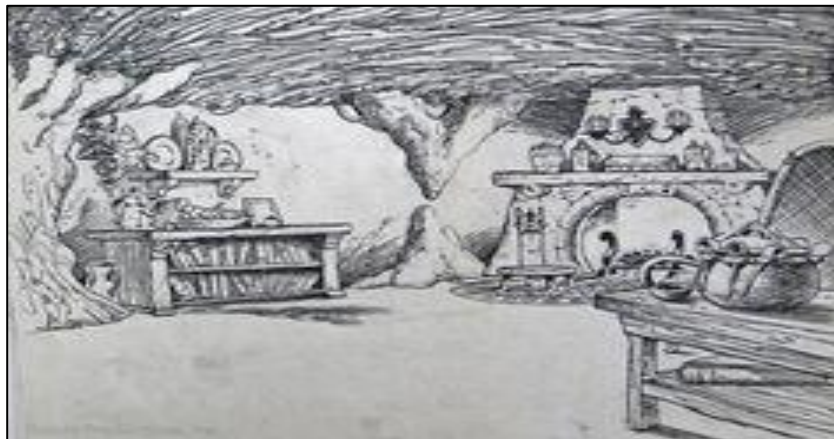


- Look at the “costume” you are currently wearing (or a favourite outfit).
- Explain what each element might tell people about you.



Mise-en-scène: Set Design

- Like costume, the set in a film or TV show can establish character for the audience.
- It can also establish **time period** and **create mood or atmosphere**.
- Once more, every detail – from furniture to books on the shelves – has been chosen so the audience make certain judgements or feel a certain way.



What can we say about this set? What does it reveal?



What can we say about this set? What does it reveal?



What can we say about this set? What does it reveal?



Set Activity: Shoebox Set Designer

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- You will be given an empty box.
- You are going to design a model bedroom set for a film or TV character of your choice.
- Put lots of detail in! Think about:
 - **furniture**
 - **colours**
 - **props like lamps, posters and other objects**
 - **even the music they like or books they might read!**
- When it's finished, add labels to explain your choices of décor!



Set Activity: Dressing a Set

- Set dressers are in charge of choosing exactly where everything goes.
- Gather two boxes of typical classroom equipment: one set for a **studious pupil**, and one for a **pupil who hates school**.
- Set dress a desk in two halves: one half for each different pupil.



Mise-en-scène: Lighting

- In the early days of cinema filmmakers only had access to natural light so they built studios with large skylights.
- This is why the industry moved to Hollywood – for better weather with more sunlight!
- Nowadays, directors have more options and can position lights carefully to:
 - Lend a scene **reality** (or unreality!)
 - **Direct our focus** onto an important person, object, etc.
 - Create an **atmosphere or mood**.



natural light



Uses light already at location, with bounce cards to reflect or block it; mimics reality.

key light



Main light source in standard 3-point lighting setup: illuminates the form of the subject or actor.

high key light



Heightens the key light and uses fill light to brighten a scene; creates an optimistic tone.

low key light



Uses fewer light sources to gain shadows, contrast and blackness for an ominous tone.

soft light



Uses large light sources/diffusion for subtle shades of light. Good for romantic scenes.

hard light



Uses a direct beam of light and less fill light to create dramatic shadows/harsh lines.

back light



Light source is behind the subject so photographing the shadow side; creates a silhouette or dramatic mood with harsh shadows on subject.

side light



Enters frame from the side to highlight a person/object; provides drama and mood.

Lighting and Colour

- Lighting can also be manipulated using coloured plastic film 'gels' or special effects to tint the overall shot with a specific colour.
- The effects can be cold, warm, eerie, otherworldly...



Lighting Activity: Test and Try!

- Gather different types of lights (torches, lamps, battery-operated candles...)
- Use different coloured plastic film to cover lights.
- Make bounce boards with cardboard and tinfoil and use natural light.
- Practice **different lighting setups** for different genres (fantasy, horror, comedy, etc.) or to create different moods.
- Position the lights in different places and at different heights. Add coloured film to some shots.
- Look for moments when natural light is doing something exciting.

Mise-en-scène: Actor Position

- While it might seem that actors are given the freedom to move how they please when on screen, in reality they are **carefully directed** on where to go and how to move, stand, sit...
- There are 'marks' (pieces of tape) on the floor that an actor must stand on – or 'hit' – exactly to make sure the shot ends up looking as the director planned.
- This is known as '**hitting your mark**'.
- If an actor misses their mark, they might be cut off in the shot or the lighting might not hit the right place.



Mise-en-scène: Actor Position

- **Body language** is also important in creating and conveying character, relationships and mood, so must be examined as part of the mise-en-scène.
 - How is the actor **standing or sitting**? How are they holding themselves (closed or open, straight or slouched...)?
 - What **gestures** are they making? What do these suggest?
 - Where are they **looking**? Do we know what they're looking at and why?
 - Where are actors **placed** in the frame (central or to the side)? Who seems to be the most important?
 - Does anyone have their **back** to the camera? Why?
- Examine the following stills and ask yourself these questions.

What do you notice about the actor positions? What do they reveal?



What do you notice about the actor positions? What do they reveal?



What do you notice about the actor positions? What do they reveal?



What do you notice about the actor positions? What do they reveal?



Actor Position Activity: Directing

- In groups, take turns being director and instructing the others to use body language and positioning to convey different emotions or situations. For example:
 - **sadness**
 - **discomfort**
 - **sulking with your parents**
 - **going into an exam you've not prepared for**
 - **going into a job interview full of confidence**
 - **watching a fight unfold**
- You could even photograph these to see how they would look in the frame.

Mise-en-scène: Putting It Together

- As we've seen, each element of mise-en-scène is interesting and exciting on its own.
- But when we pull all these elements together, we can find and learn much more.
- This is how we develop a much deeper analysis of what we see on the screen.
- The following slides give an idea of how this might look, along with a paragraph that could be written about the shot.



SET

LIGHTING



ACTOR POSITION

COSTUME

SET

Pastel colours: suggest light and colourful lifestyle.

By the water suggests beach resort and therefore sun-and-fun lifestyle.

Near a big city so still connected to the modern world.

Side-by-side: suggests closeness and compatibility.

Character on right looks much more relaxed than the one on the left, whose body is closed off.

ACTOR POSITION

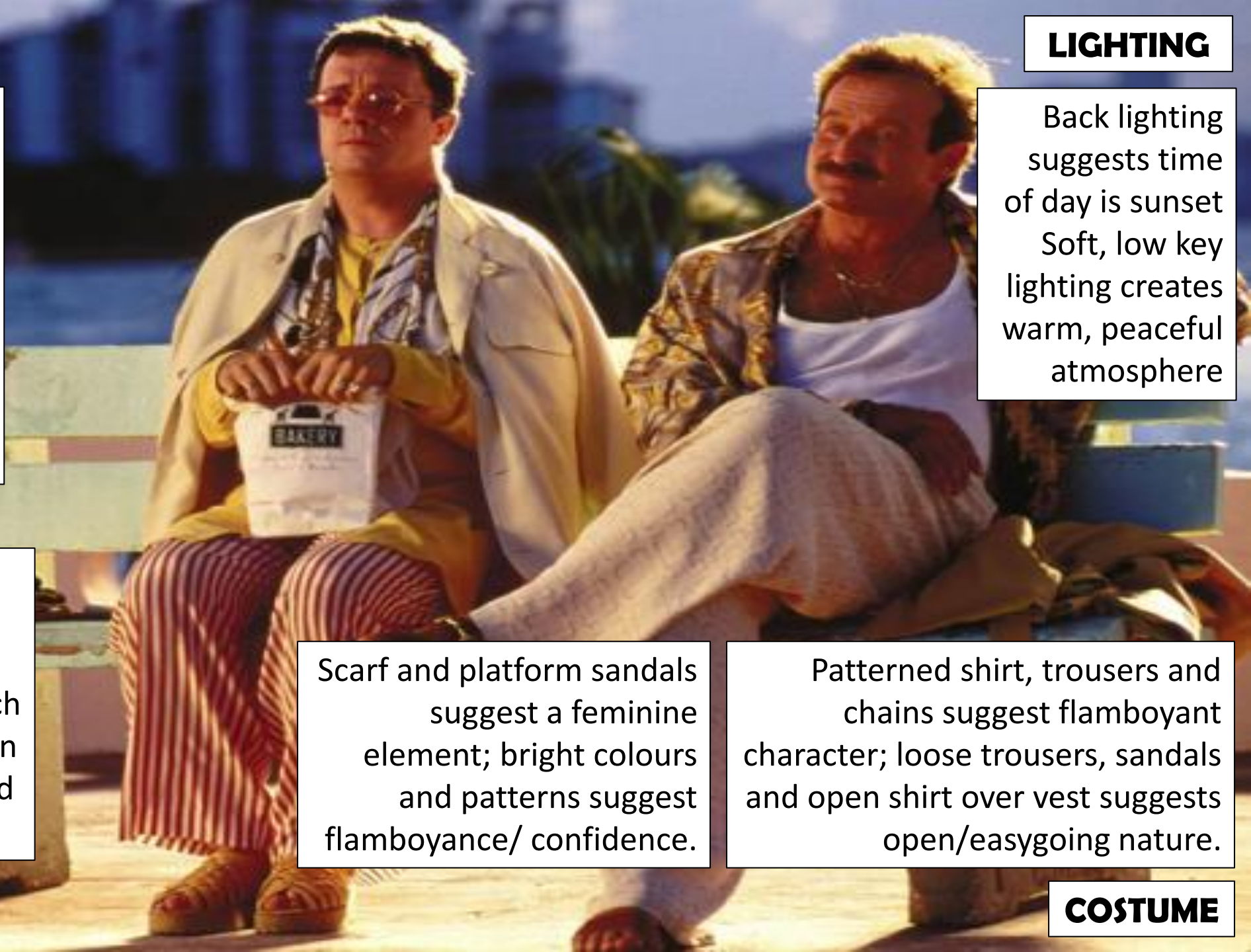
LIGHTING

Back lighting suggests time of day is sunset
Soft, low key lighting creates warm, peaceful atmosphere

Scarf and platform sandals suggest a feminine element; bright colours and patterns suggest flamboyance/ confidence.

Patterned shirt, trousers and chains suggest flamboyant character; loose trousers, sandals and open shirt over vest suggests open/easygoing nature.

COSTUME



Mise-en-scène: Paragraph Example

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The shot is of two men sitting together on a bench with a backdrop of a stretch of water and a city skyline. Being by the water suggests perhaps they are at a beach resort and therefore have a light, sun-and-fun lifestyle. The bench, ground and wall are all pastel colours (as are the characters' costumes) which supports this idea of a light, fun and colourful lifestyle. One character wears a scarf and platform sandals suggesting they have a feminine side, while the bright colours and patterns uphold the idea of a fun lifestyle and suggests they are flamboyant and confident. However, the actor's body language is closed and upright so perhaps they are not as confident as their costume suggests. The character on the right also has a costume that suggests flamboyance – a patterned shirt, patterned trousers and gold chains. He is clearly more open and easy-going than the other character as suggested by his loose trousers, sandals and open shirt, as well as by his open body language. They are sitting side-by-side, suggested closeness and compatibility; this, combined with the back lighting that looks as though it is sunset, and the soft, low key lighting creates a warm, peaceful and, perhaps, romantic atmosphere. All of this suggests that these two characters are in a romantic relationship.

Mise-en-scène: Review Carousel

- Each group will be given a different film still to analyse.
- Look closely at everything you see in the frame:
colour **costume** **set** **lighting** **actor position**
- Annotate the picture with notes about the mise-en-scène.
- When the time is up, pass the picture to the next group and take a new one from them.
- Read what they have written and add your ideas to the notes for your new picture.



















Metro Goldwyn Mayer











Credits

Resource developed by Gail Robertson on behalf of Screen Scotland.

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