

## Introduction to “mise-en-scene”.

First of all, it's French and it's pronounced “meez on senn” (a lot of early Film Studies theory came out of France in the 1950s and 60s and the term was originally applied to theatre). It means “put into the scene”. Very simply, it means everything that you can see on the screen and how the elements have been shown and arranged **to create effects**. This includes:

- **Location**, including things like the weather and time of day.
- **Performers** and their **performances**.
- **Costume**.
- **Make-up**.
- **Props** (short for ‘theatrical properties’, originally used in theatre). Any objects that have been included.
- **Colour palette** – the deliberate use of specific colours to affect mood or convey symbolism.

**Remember that pretty much everything that appears in the frame is there by choice and has a reason for being there.**

Now, a word about ‘lighting’. Many film theorists include lighting in “mise-en-scene” analysis (and you’ll be looking at a blog that does just that in a moment or two). However, Eduqas (our exam board) includes lighting in “cinematography” analysis. This is because, on film sets, lighting is directed by the cinematographer. It’s also a fairly big topic in itself, so we will handle ‘lighting’ in a later page.

### **Activity 1: Create a workspace and embed your knowledge.**

It’s a great idea to start your **own Film Studies notebook** at this point. You could make it an e-notebook or a hard copy. You could print & stick or –e copy the still shots and label them.

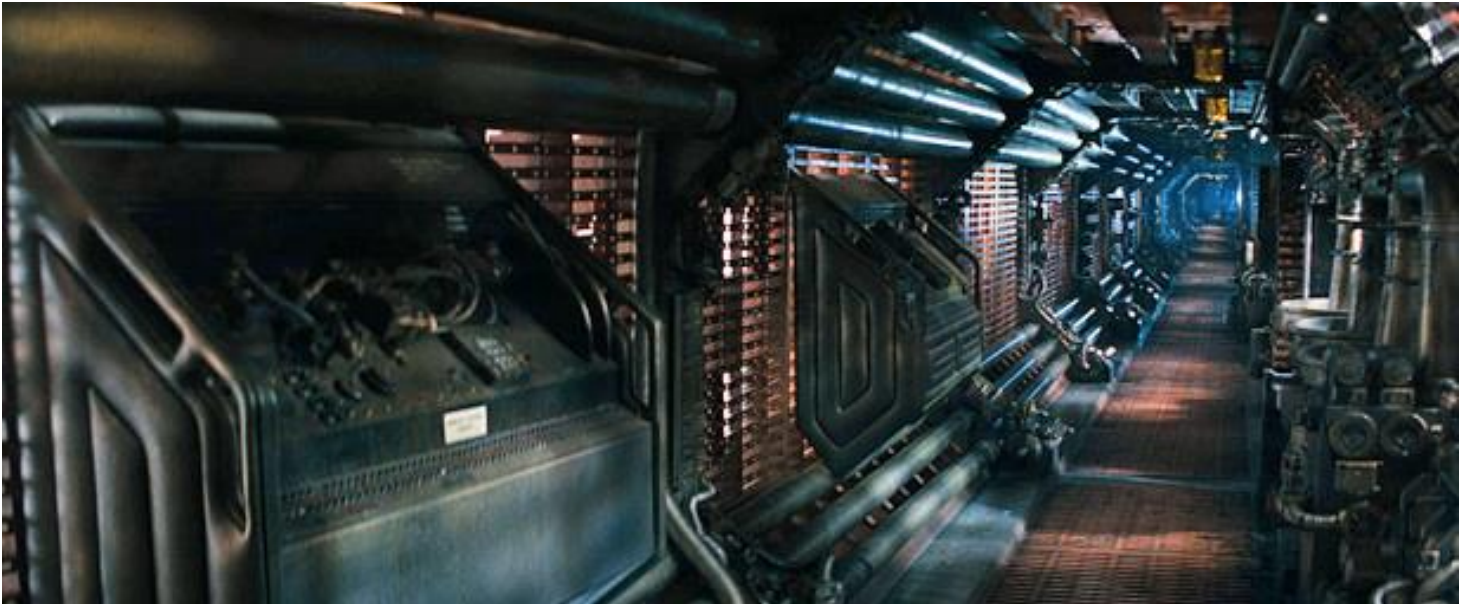
Go to this webpage - an excellent blog by Herman Wilkins and read the first 7 points.

[www.studiobinder.com/blog/mise-en-scene-elements/](http://www.studiobinder.com/blog/mise-en-scene-elements/)

Sorry, guys, but I couldn’t get a hyperlink to work, so copy and paste into a browser, please !

**Make notes in your Notebook.** You can read points 8-20 but Herman moves on to things we will look at in ‘cinematography’ later. Herman is writing for people who want to make a movie – that could be you !

**Activity 2: Applying what you know so far.**



Take a close look at this still of the interior of the space-ship “Nostromo” (*Alien*, Ridley Scott, 1979) and answer the questions below.

1. What impression do you get of “Nostromo” from the mise-en-scene as a place in which to live, work and fight for your life! ?
2. What’s everything made of? Are there any luxuries ?
3. How have features of mise-en-scene created those impressions ?
4. If you find it hard to think of ideas, describe what you can see.
5. The passageway...is it wide or thin ? Is it short, or does it look endless ? Are there curves or straight lines ?
6. Do there appear to be any escape routes ?
7. Why were the pipes important to include ? What do they make you think of ?
8. How many different colours are used, many or few (colour palette) ?
9. What colours are used and what sort of mood do these colours create (happy, cheerful, grim) ?

**Activity 3: Comparison.**

Now do the same for this still-shot of the interior of another spaceship, “Discovery One” (2001 A Space Odyssey, Kubrik, 1968). What makes this different to “Nostromo”? You have costume to consider in this shot, too. What does that tell you about the environment?

Extension: what do those boxes on the floor remind you of and why might they be part of the mise-en-scene?



**Activity 4: Strengthen your understanding.**

Paste this link into a browser and watch a video analysis of a trailer to learn more about mise-en-scene. Add to your notes with more examples:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFiP-E1zTRc>

Wider reading:

<https://collegefilmandmediastudies.com/mise-en-scene-2/>

Again, sorry that I couldn't make these hyperlinks function.

### **Activity 5: mise-en-scene and genre.**



Genre (type of film it is) is often connoted through mise-en-scene through the use of features that are repeated within and across films. This could be setting, costumes, props and performance.

What features of mise-en-scene establish this film as a Western ?

Choose a genre you like and search for still-shots that use mise-en-scene to establish that genre.

### **Activity 6: Over to you.**

Fully embed your knowledge and start thinking more deeply about what you see on screen by watching a movie or selection of trailers of films you love.

Build up examples in your notebook (pause the film >press Shift + Prt Scrn simultaneously and then paste into a Word doc) with annotations.