

**Film Literacy**  
**Assignment #2**

**How does shot composition, editing, and music help construct meaning?**

Standards: WM-T, WM-E, WM-O, MW-P, RI-E

Please write a 5 paragraph essay addressing the unit's essential questions (see above). You must include domain language and cite examples from the text (*Maze Runner*).

Assignment Due Date: Thursday, January 15, 2014

The story of *Maze Runner*, follows Thomas, a young boy dropped into a mysterious world without any memories of what happened to him. Thomas discovers that countless other boys have preceded him and they introduce him to the society they have created in a field area (called The Glade) that sits surrounded by colossal walls. The movie primarily takes place in the Glade, a field and wooded environment inside the walls of the maze, and the maze- full of empty corridors eclipsed by towering stone walls, with traps, complex turns and confusion. Thomas learns that beyond the walls rests the deadly maze; which has claimed scores of lives, yet holds the only known way out within it. With help from the other boys, and Teresa- the newest arrival to the maze, Thomas sets out to uncover truth behind why they have been sent inside the walls and discovers that the maze is only the beginning of a bigger battle. Released in 2014, *Maze Runner* is a high grossing film based on a novel of the same title. The dystopian setting of the film provides a door to exploring darker themes and keeps audiences engaged in suspenseful and dramatic moments. In the film, shot composition, editing, and music play a key role in constructing meaning and communicating a lasting memorandum onto the audience.

*Maze Runner* contains elements of action and suspense, as well as thoughtful and mysterious moments, that are edited together in a rhythm fitting with the flow of events in the story. The film uses establishing shots to build the world it occupies, allowing viewers to understand elements such as the size of the maze, the area that the Glade resides in or the height of the walls. During conversations between characters, as when Thomas talks to Chuck, a fellow Glader from inside a caged pit, shots are paired with their reverse shots allowing spectators to see both sides of the conversation and feel more engaged. As Thomas' journey takes him into the maze and he encounters a Griever, the rhythm of the shots upscales to a quick pace, switching from multiple angles allowing you to understand the action that is happening and see the situations that Thomas is encountering.

Long shots of scenes where Thomas might be running from obstacles in the maze or a Griever, are broken up with quick shots from another point of view, letting viewers in on different perspectives. One of the best examples of this is when Thomas is running from a Griever down walls that are closing rapidly, the camera follows ahead of Thomas watching. This extended shot of Thomas running is broken up with a shot of what is ahead of him, as Minho, another Glader, calls his name for him to hurry. These shots blended in, allow viewers to see how desperate Minho is for Thomas to make it away from the Griever and give viewers a look at the relationship the characters share. The introduction of the film also is full of jump cuts as Thomas arrives in the elevator, and the fast pace of switching angles drops the spectator right into the

middle of the action, giving them a brutal awakening to what is to come in the maze, throughout the rest of the movie. In contrast, the ending scenes of the movie leave a powerful impact with longer shots that give you a look into the dramatic moments that are unfolding. Large amounts of slow-motion footage build emotion as viewers process events that are occurring, and how characters like Thomas are feeling. By editing scenes like this, the filmmakers are able to let the viewers experience more profound feelings during moments of this film as they can feel relationships between characters, and see more environments around them.

Throughout the film different sounds, and music are present, to add suspense, impact, mystery, and help move the viewer into the world of Thomas, and the other Gladers. Sound plays a big part in flushing important moments out, as well as helping more mundane moments feel still intertwined with the concepts in the movie. Starting from the very first scene, as Thomas arrives in the elevator, viewers are met with loud violent sounding metallic-like noises, and effects. The sound in this scene, paired with the fast paced editing style, create a frightful opening to the movie, meeting viewers with the sudden painful sounds just as Thomas is experiencing, building the cinematic experience. While Thomas, and others are in the maze, lingering ambient sounds, almost like white noise, exist, and susurrus in the background leaving an eerie suspense. The Grievers hold the same style of metallic sounds as the elevator in the beginning, which lets viewers share in the same horror they are met with in the beginning, and identify the antagonism that the Gladers are facing. During scenes in the Glade, the orchestral score provides a sense of peace, and security, while ambient noise of grasses, and wind keeps us believing this field like environment. In the final scenes, just like the editing, the non-diegetic sound (the music, and effects) seem to slow down, and build to the epic conclusion, pulling spectators deeper into the emotion, and tone of the story as they prepare to bid farewell. The composed music of the film aids viewers along the story, as sound helps establish elements of the story as actual moments.

The film *Maze Runner* begins the story of Thomas as he strives to learn what has become of the world around him, together with the small phalanx of Gladers that accompanied him out of the maze. As Thomas faces the dichotomy, and decisions the maze has invoked, viewers feel engaged in understanding the struggles as well as dangers. Watching *Maze Runner* brings you close to the characters relationships, and makes the world feel believable. The filmmaking team utilized the power of editing, shot composition, and music to aid in building the unique, and mysterious world of the maze.