

# Media Literacy 41G (Term 2) – Mr. Lunney

## Stages of Video Production

### Stage 1 – Pre-Production

#### 1. Idea generation

Good ideas can be hard to come up with. Even professional scriptwriters sometimes have trouble coming up with ideas!

Here are two solutions to this problem:

1) Think of a book (or comic book) that you have read. How can you adapt part of the story for your own video? Maybe you use the characters as a starting point for developing your own hero. Almost 400 films have been made based on Shakespeare's plays. How many films can you think of based on comic books? There are quite a few!

2) Use your own experience about life to create an idea. What if something unusual happened at school one day? Suppose your teacher was replaced by an alien studying humans or a bolt of lightning hit your best friend and suddenly turned her/him into a genius. The "what if" formula is a very common way to generate ideas.

Whatever you decide on the key thing to remember is to **tell a story!** Stories always have a beginning, middle and end. Start your story by setting up the action. Introduce your characters and show the situation as it should be normally. Next, something happens that forces the characters to act. This brings in the conflict, tension or problem that the characters must overcome. In the mean time the characters develop and change. Bring the story to a conclusion, resolve the conflict.

#### **Different Genres**

A genre is a type of text, a format for communicating information.

Here are some examples:

- comedy
- action
- mystery
- science fiction
- documentary
- music video
- commercial

Regardless of the format or genre of your video you need to remember that there are only three basic reasons to communicate: to entertain, to persuade, to inform.

## 2. The treatment

The treatment is a written document that summarizes the story line (plot) of the video or film. A treatment contains a plot summary and character information.

Usually the writer and the director get together to "pitch" the idea to a producer. The producer then decides whether or not to fund the video. In your case you can think of the teacher as the producer. You need to convince your teacher that she or he should let you make your video.

Your teacher may have a handout for you to follow or you might need to write up a plot and character summary for yourself.

## 3. The storyboard

The storyboard is a planning overview document.

The top part contains a sketch showing the actors (talent) and, roughly, the background. You can draw stick figures if your sketching talent is not yet developed but it is important to try to illustrate the camera angle.

The scene and script notes allow you to jot down the name of the scene so that your crew can talk about it and refer to the script if you have one.

Location/background makes a note about what you need in the background of the shot or scene.

Sound effects refer to any noises or effects that you might want to include while you tape live. Sound effects can also be added during the editing process.

Notes just allows you to add any important information for your records.

You would usually have about ten storyboard frames for a two or three minute video. The frames would show the main scenes (not every shot). A shot list is the detailed list of each shot in the scene.

## 4. Location

Location refers to the place that you video tape the project. There are generally two types of location:

- 1) sets
- 2) remote location

If you are shooting a regular video with a camcorder you should spend some time scouting locations and getting permission to use a location on a given day and time. Permission should be obtained from your teacher for location shots.

Planning your locations is important to the look and feel of your video project. Include notes about backdrop, sets and location on your storyboard and watch for continuity errors if you shoot on two different days!

## 5. Casting

Casting is the process of determining which person will play each role in the project. For the Lego Studio movies you will want to try to cast characters that look like they belong in a given role. If you are casting people you will want to cast your actors to match the character. Actors are sometimes called "talent" because we assume that they are talented.

## Stage 2 – Production

### 1. Continuity

Continuity is one of the trickiest and most important ideas to understand when you make a movie. In a nutshell, continuity is the consistency of the action. It's the control over everything looking the same and the action flowing the right way.

#### **Concept #1: Always Establish the Setting**

The establishing shot is the first shot of a scene. It establishes the setting or context in which all of the action will take place.

### 2. Lighting

When shooting video it is important to use proper lighting. Lighting can affect brightness, contrast and saturation.

**Brightness** is amount of light allowed into the camera.

**Contrast** is the level of light to dark. High contrast gives very light whites and very dark blacks.

**Saturation** is the level of colour in the video. (i.e. colour vs black and white)

It is important that you avoid glare or shadows when using light. Lights are usually used inside or outside if it is not really sunny.

### 3. Composition

Composition is the control over what and how your audience sees a scene. As a director you need to guide the audiences' eyes. You want to reveal what is important and frame the view so that it is interesting. Most of the rules of video composition are the same in art. If you are good at composition in art you should be able to apply your skills to video.

### **Keys to Good Composition:**

**a.) Leave eye room.**

Leave some space on the frame for the character to look into.

**b.) Give your characters some head room.**

Allow a little bit of room at the top of the frame for the character's head. Don't cut off the top of the head!

**c.) Allow your characters room to "speak into."**

This is very important for real actors. They need some room on the frame to speak into.

**d.) Frame the shot so that you are not cutting off your actors at the joints.**

**e.) Frame your subjects.**

Sometimes you can use a doorway or a tree to frame your actors. This is a good technique that gives a sense of completeness to the shot.

**f.) Follow the rule of thirds.**

The rule of thirds states that when you divide up the frame into nine equal rectangles the most important information should be placed at the intersection of the rectangles.

## **4. Props and sets**

You can make props and sets from whatever is handy and looks good. One of the great things about video is that you are creating an illusion of time and space. Your backdrop for a desert scene can be a brown blanket rolled up to form dunes. Flat backdrops can have the illusion of three dimensional space with the proper light and shading.

Use whatever is at hand to create props and sets. Be creative!

## **5. Production team members**

If you are working in a small group (as is usually the case) you can divide up the production jobs. In a big production the following jobs would have supervisors with assistants:

**Director:** Oversees the project. She or he is responsible for the continuity, the flow of the action and the look of the production. The director keeps in mind the big picture, the whole of the story and all of its parts and moves all of the action towards a resolution of the story.

**Writer:** The writers are responsible for the story, the script and revisions to the dialogue. They help the director create a storyboard.

**Shooter (camera operator):** The shooters or camera operators are responsible for capturing the images as instructed by the director.

**Talent:** The actors play the roles in the production.

**Audio Technician:** Audio Techs are responsible for capturing the audio to tape. In a big budget production the audio and film are synchronized.

**Stage Manager:** Organizes who needs to be on the set and the shooting schedule with the director.

Costume Designer, Set Designer, Gaffer, Electrician, Lighting Coordinator, Foley Artists, and so on all have specialized jobs on a big budget production. A crew for a movie can be as large as 200 people!

## **Stage 3 – Post-Production**

### **1. Editing**

After you have recorded all the scenes you can use editing software to produce your video. The steps involved are:

- a.) Capture Video – Take scenes from camera and store them on the computer.
- b.) Edit each scene – cut out unnecessary parts
- c.) Place on timeline
- d.) Save work.

### **2. Credits and titles**

You can add credits and titles to your video project by positioning the scrubber where you want the title to start. Normally titles go at the beginning of a video and credits go at the end. All people involved with the production should be listed in the credits.

### **3. Transitions**

Transitions help you move from one scene or shot to another. The key to a good transition is to make it "invisible" to the audience. If the audience is aware of the transitions their attention is not focused on the action. Transitions can show the passage of time, sometimes years!

Try to use transitions that work with your movie. Don't include transitions just because they look cool.

## 4. Special effects

Special effects are shots that are sometimes dangerous, sometimes fantastic (in the sense that they are impossible in reality) or sometimes just plain cool shots that take a lot of time to create.

## 5. Audio

Audio includes sound caught on the video tape i.e. scripts of casts voices, special sound effects, music, or voiceovers.

Name: Production Title:	Location: Client:
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Scene:	Shot:

Shot description:

Audio:

Effects/Graphics:

Dialog & Narration:

Transition:

Scene:	Shot:

Shot description:

Audio:

Effects/Graphics:

Dialog & Narration:

Transition:

Scene:	Shot:

Shot description:

Audio:

Effects/Graphics:

Dialog & Narration:

Transition: