

Unit 3

LESSON 6B

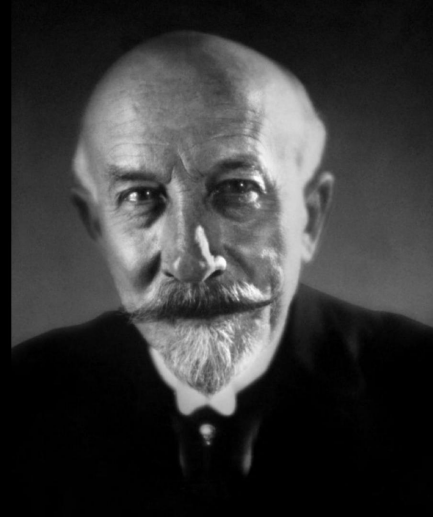
THERE WAS THIS GUY...

Lesson Objective

Explore Georges Méliès and the beginnings of fantasy, science fiction, and special effects in film.

FAIRYTALES
ONLY HAPPEN
IN MOVIES.

George Melies



Lesson Assignments

You will complete one viewing log on A Trip to the Moon. Instructions can be found

George Melies

Watch this video and learn why Melies is considered the Master of Illusion. Take notes in your process journal.



George Melies, Master of Illusion

Maries Georges Jean Méliès was born in Paris in 1861. From a very early age, he showed a particular interest in the arts which led, as a boy, to a place at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris where Méliès showed particular interest in stage design and puppetry.

- Méliès' principle contribution to cinema was the combination of traditional theatrical elements to motion pictures - he sought to present spectacles of a kind not possible in live theatre.
- Méliès discovered that cinema had the capacity for manipulating and distorting time and space. He devised some complex special effects.
- He pioneered the first double-exposure in *La caverne Maudite* (1898), the first split screen with performers acting opposite themselves in *Un Homme de tete* (1898) and the first dissolve in *Cendrillon* (1899).
- In the late 1890s, Méliès saw an exhibition of the Lumiere brothers Cinematographe, purchased one (despite the brothers telling him it would probably never be a moneymaker) and began making fanciful little films.
- Méliès combined magician's stagecraft, slide projections, and rudimentary in-camera effects to create highly stylized and entertaining filmed stories.
- It was Méliès who discovered that by stopping and starting the hand cranked camera he could make objects and people pop in and out of the scene as if by magic—so to speak.
- He refined this technique to include reverse cranking at the end of one scene in order to create a dissolve into the next (scene).
- One day Méliès was out on the streets of Paris trying out his new Cinematographe. As he was filming a bus driving by, the hand cranked camera jammed. He took a few minutes to clear the jam and then started cranking again. When he developed and projected the street footage, he was astonished to see the bus seemingly transform into a hearse.
- Melies had inadvertently created an in-camera edit, but more importantly, he had stumbled upon a way to reproduce his on-stage magic with the camera.

Melies - Special Effects Innovator

Méliès produced amusing films that featured magical creatures and mythological events.

Most importantly, his work gave birth to the science fiction genre.

La Voyage De La Lune (A Trip to the Moon) is a remarkable film in many ways. Based on the 1901 H.G. Wells story, the film features many elements, images, and concepts that would become elements of science fiction film - ultra-advanced technology, space travel, aggressive aliens, and strangely enough, Moon women.

Méliès combined his stagecraft, flats, painted backdrops, smoke bombs - with his newly discovered camera trickery - jump cuts, dissolves, and split screen effects to create a vision of the future that still entertains audiences today.



La Voyage De La Lune (A Trip to the Moon)

A Trip to the Moon - Viewing Log

10 points/250 words minimum

Watch George Méliès black-and-white silent movie *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*) (1902).

[THIS VERSION](#) INCLUDES A VOICEOVER WHICH IS NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL FILM.

While you are watching, see if you can determine:

- *does the film uses continuity editing or parallel editing.*

Also examine the use of the following, and explain how the special effect help to tell the story:

- *special effects (SFX)*
- *scenic design*
- *shot types that help tell the story.*

VL assignment upload directions

Compile your responses into a PDF Document for submission.

1. UPLOAD your document to SEQTA
2. UPLOAD your document to the your google drive under Textual Analysis

Review - [IB Film Studies Portfolio Website](#)

Note: For all assignments, title your PDF document in the following way -

(Title of assignment) (First name) (Initial of your second name)

For example, if your name is Rupert Jones, and you are submitting this assignment, A Trip to the Moon, the file will be titled -

A Trip to the Moon Rupert J

Dianne St Clair
PHOTOGRAPHY

Extension:

Watch Hugo

Watch the History of Hugo

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0970179/>

Watch the FILM

Hugo is a 2011 historical adventure drama film directed and produced by Martin Scorsese and ... home, where they find a hidden cache of more imaginative drawings of **Méliès**, but are caught by Georges, who banishes **Hugo** from his home.



SCIENCE FICTION

As a definition of the genre, science fiction stories take place where the rules of science work, as opposed to fantasy stories where rules of magic work.

In a sense, anything can happen in fantasy, but there are tight controls or the story does not seem very satisfying.

For instance, the rules for how magic works are generally set up at the beginning of the story, otherwise the ending could not be anticipated by the audience. That tends to make the story feel arbitrary or random.

Each genre has a set of conventions or rules that govern how stories are told within the genre. A science fiction story really should break the rules of what we know to be true.

George Lucas likes to call his *Star Wars* series space fantasy. In this way, no one could criticise him when spaceships turn around in outer space, and make screaming sounds when there is no atmosphere to conduct those sounds to the viewer.

Often, science fiction is based not on spaceships or time-travel, but on the social conditions that confront people.

Social science fiction tends to look at trends, such as overpopulation.

Films like *Soylent Green* (1973) are social science fiction that take place in a future where overpopulation means people have to depend on artificially produced food products to survive.

Metropolis vs Blade Runner

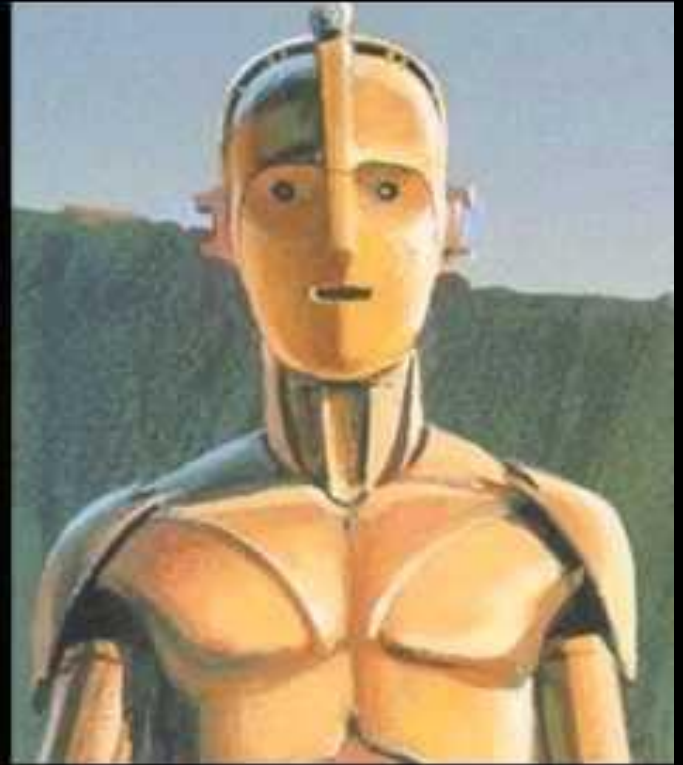
In addition to still being one of the greatest science fiction movies ever made, Metropolis has been a major inspiration to many sci-fi films made even decades after its release.

One such film is Ridley Scott's Blade Runner (1982), starring Harrison Ford, which we will study later this year.

View this cool video edited by David Dryer, supervisor of special photographic effects on Blade Runner to see how Metropolis inspired those working on Scott's 1982 film. As you'll see, some similarities between the films occur by choice, while others occur through happenstance as a result of creating a world for which the two films shared a vision.



Then, watch this video to hear George Lucas, creator of the Star Wars saga, discuss how Metropolis and other films influenced his productions.



UTOPIA

A utopia is a perfect place

As a literary genre, this kind of story actually predates most of what we think of as science fiction.

A Utopia is the perfect nation or (later) the perfect planet where society has been adjusted so mankind's life is perfect.

There are not many Utopian films for one good reason. As we saw when we looked at the three-act structure and the Heroes' Journey, stories are about conflict.

The focus in any story tends to be problem-solving, and we want to see the characters confront and change their world for the better. That cannot happen in a Utopia because the world is perfect. most common on film.

For that reason, most films about 'the perfect world' are Dystopias.

Think about it - would your version of a 'perfect world' be perfect for your parents? Your friends at school? Your teachers?

Everyone's version of a 'perfect world' represents a pretty awful place to someone else.

Because dealing with someone else's Utopia is a situation that entails a lot of conflict, it is filmed Dystopias that are

DYSTOPIA

Like all science fiction, Dystopias are not really about the problems of the future - they are about the problems of our contemporary society projected into the future.

One of the most famous dystopian films is Metropolis (1927), a silent film directed by the great filmmaker Fritz Lang.

You can find a link to Metropolis [here:](#) or [Here](#)

AFTER watching this film, an excellent analysis of it that we highly recommend that you read:

<https://deepfocusreview.com/definitives/metropolis/>





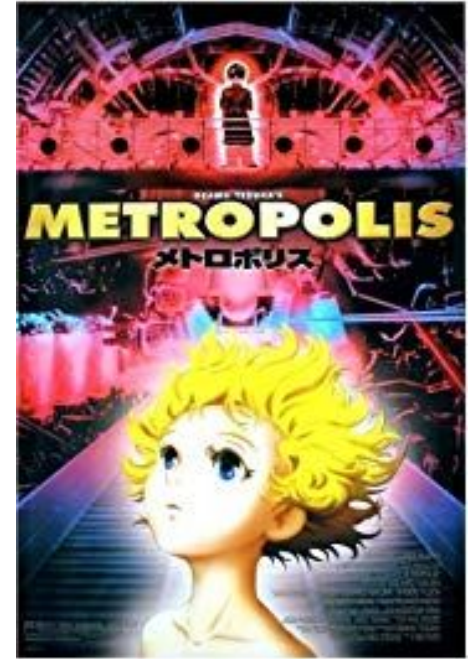
When *Metropolis* was made, the term "science fiction" did not even exist. But like all science fiction movies to come after it, the film had a lot to say about the sociocultural time period in which it was made, and the concerns of this time - such as the relationship between the upper class and lower class workers, the possibility of revolution, and the dangers that could be created by science.

One of the most interesting films inspired by *Metropolis* is the Japanese anime film *Metropolis* (2001), directed by Rintaro and written by Katsuhio Otomo based on the classic manga by famous artist Osamu Tezuka.

The film was inspired by pictures of the original *Metropolis* that Tezuka saw and features many common elements - a worker's revolt (this time against robot workers), a female robot, giant cities where the rich live high above the poor who are forced to stay in underground levels, and much more.

You can see the trailer for this film here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij9ruL8B310>



Since its release in 1927, *Metropolis* has had a powerful effect on many filmmakers around the world, as we will see when we discuss its influence on George Lucas's *Star War* series and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*.

And like all great Dystopias, *Metropolis* gives us a chance to reflect on society and its structure and to wonder: What if I had to live this way?



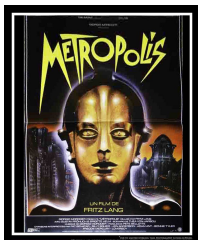
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As you read about the development of the film industry in these countries, consider this question:

To what extent is an understanding of film dependent on an understanding of how film industries behaved in different cultures and time periods?



CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Production Design

Now that you have watched *Metropolis*, consider the way the art design of the film creates meaning for the viewer.

The Class Divide

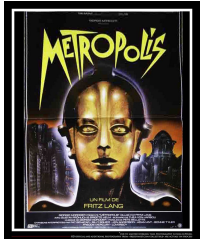
One of the central visual ideas of *Metropolis* is the use of vertical space. Fritz Lang says one of the inspirations for the film was his first visit to New York and encountering skyscrapers for the first time.

In the film, we encounter a futuristic city with gigantic buildings, the space between them resembling canyons with planes flying between them and cars driving on gigantic suspended highways.

The giant size of the buildings conveys the future to us, but the point is also quickly made that the rich live at the top of the buildings and the poor live in the cavern-like dwellings beneath the city.

In *Metropolis*, the upper class literally live high above the lower classes, a point even made by the intertitles at one point.





CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Introduction of Science Fiction

Rotwang, the Scientist who creates the evil robot version of Maria, lives in a small, medieval-looking building, and the room in which he creates the robot features a pentagram - a star that is often associated with witches.

The science fiction film convention of the mad scientist had not yet come to be, but here the art design links the scientist to the notion of a medieval wizard - similar to the character of Dr. Caligari.

In Rotwang and Dr. Caligari, we can see the convention of the mad scientist being introduced to film.





CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Art Design and Symbolism

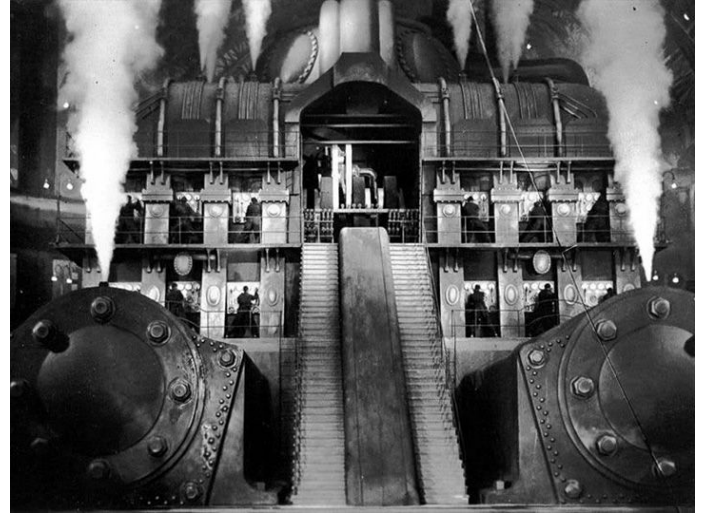
Art design functions as symbolism as well. When the M-machine explodes and the workers are killed, Freder is thrown against the wall and has a vision.

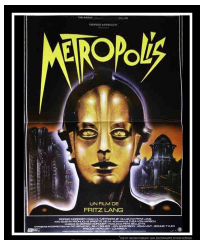
He sees the workers transform into slaves and the machine transform into the god Moloch.

As he watches, workers are lead up the stairs to the machine like slaves and fed to the constantly moving gears that look like horrible teeth.

In this scene, we see things from Freder's point-of-view, and his vision brings to mind the similarity of the workers to slaves in the Bible.

Later, Maria will preach to the workers about the Tower of Babel, and again this will result in a vision of the workers turning into slaves working on the Tower of Babel until they revolt.





CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Religious Overtones

The religious nature of the imagery in the film does not end with the Moloch or the Tower of Babel scenes.

The catacombs Maria preaches in, with its crucifixes and ancient graves, remind us of the early Christians who had to meet in similar places to avoid persecution.

When Freder suffers a mental breakdown, he has visions of the Seven Deadly Sins and sees Death descend upon the city as he hallucinates.

These religious associations are central to one of the key ideas in the film, that there must be a 'mediator between the head and the hands'.

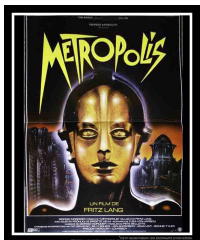
At several points, Freder is associated with Jesus who serves as a mediator between mankind and God.

These associations, created by the narrative and by the design elements of the film, create powerful images and emotions in the film.

One particularly powerful scene is when Freder takes the place of the worker at the machine that looks like a giant clock.

At one point his arms are spread almost as if he is on a crucifix, and he calls out "How long must this go on !"



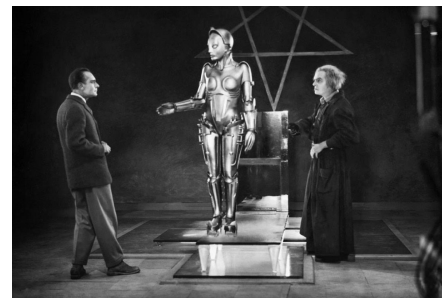
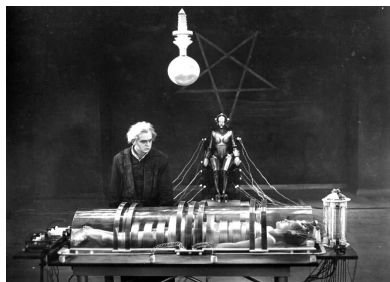


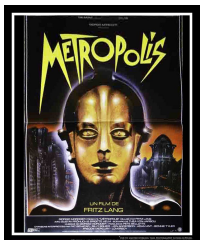
CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Mise-en-scene and Meaning

Consider from *Metropolis* the design of objects and where they are placed in the frame. You may want to view the film again and pay attention to the lighting, camera angle, and movement.

All these elements of mise-en-scene reveal the director's intent, letting us understand the film's theme and *meaning*.





CREATING MEANING METROPOLIS

Production Influence

It might also be interesting to consider this film's influence on *Star Wars*. The most obvious connection is, of course, the robot Rotwang creates. She is clearly the female version of C-3PO from *Star Wars*.

But you might also notice that Rotwang has a black-gloved, artificial hand...revealing he is part machine himself. This is not too different from Darth Vader who is part machine, and even Luke himself will sport a black glove over a machine hand in *Return of the Jedi*.

At one level, both films stress the need for us to focus on our humanity and not become slaves to technology. How is this conveyed visually?

For example, what are the differences in the performance between the real Maria and the robot Maria in the film?

As you continue to look at films, you will notice again and again how visual design conveys not just information about setting but also emotion and *meaning* to the audience. The more you are aware of this, the more easily you will be able to use production design and film language to speak to the audiences of your own films.



SPACE CHASE SEQUENCE

Film Space and Time vs Real Space and Time

This production assignment will exploit some of the consequences of continuity editing, and reveal some of the tricks filmmakers have up their sleeves in order to give the illusion that places exist that actually do not exist at all.

This illusion can be created with special effects, such as the Schufftan process, which you saw at work in *Metropolis*, but film magic can also be achieved simply with editing.

Film space and time **are not the same** as real space and time.

One of the clear giveaways of watching an amateur film compared to one made by a serious student of the cinema is the amateur will rely only on the single environment they are in and show the action in one continuous take.

Certainly, continuity is desirable, but what we want to work toward is not literal continuity, but the illusion of continuity



[Click here](#)
**for the
requirements**

The Space Chase Production Task

You are going to create a one-minute chase sequence in which we see someone running through a variety of different locations and doors, as if the action, in the film world, were one continuous sequence.

In the real world, however, each location will be a different place geographically.

Success in this assignment will be determined by the degree to which you sell the illusion the chase is continuous.

Space Chase examples

Here are two examples of the Space Chase production assignment produced by previous IB students. *Note that they are a bit longer than the one-minute time limit we are placing on your Space Chase production*

You will see that each has a different style, and tell varying stories.

Note: all sound needs to be student-created in order to adhere to IB policies. The following videos are to provide a sense of what they could look like. Some videos have student created sound and others have used sound that IB would not accept. Please be aware of the student-created sound IB Film policy and follow accordingly.



