Teacher's Key

Cinematography Across Cultures: Why Films Look Different (Level C1)

Vocabulary Matching

1 seamless = **N**
2 formulaic = **A**
3 gritty = **H**
4 manifesto = **L**
5 pioneering = **G**
6 diffused = **M**
7 stylized = **I**
8 choreographed = **E**
9 spectacle = **D**
10 meticulous = **O**
11 motif = **J**
12 set piece = **K**
13 austere = **B**
14 porous = **C**
15 baseline = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 seamless
2 formulaic
3 gritty
4 manifesto
5 pioneering
6 stylized
7 choreographed
8 spectacle
9 meticulous
10 motif
11 set piece
12 austere
13 porous
14 baseline

True or False

1 **False.** Both films show you where to look and how to feel. Only the style differs.
2 **True.** Rarely does a viewer notice any of this, which is exactly the point.
3 **False.** Average shots shrank from about ten seconds to under four seconds.
4 **True.** The reading says he used a light camera held in his hands and mostly natural light.
5 **False.** Dogme 95 dates from 1995. Breathless is the film from 1960.
6 **True.** They admitted this about their first Dogme films.
7 **True.** He was a stills photographer who had never operated a movie camera.
8 **False.** The writer says it is risky to speak of a single Indian look.
9 **True.** The reading says the film's two houses were built from scratch.
10 **False.** The reading says the films came from Hollywood studios.

Language Focus: Negative Inversion for Emphasis

Example answer: **Seldom do** directors allow the camera to cut away during a fight scene like this one.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 Both films show the viewer where to look and how to feel. They differ in style: the Hollywood thriller cuts smoothly between faces so the technique goes unnoticed, while the Japanese drama uses a low camera that hardly moves.

2 Seamless means smooth, with no visible joins. Shots are matched so viewers always know who is where, and the camera stays on one side of an imaginary line, so the cutting does not draw attention to itself.

3 Coutard used a light camera held in his hands and mostly natural light, where Hollywood aims for smooth, controlled cutting and framing. One reason was a tiny budget. Accept a strong answer that adds that the result looked rough and restless and was widely copied.

4 The founders demanded filming on location, a handheld camera, and no special lighting. The reading says they admitted, in their first Dogme films, to breaking a few of the rules.

5 One is the quiet realism of Satyajit Ray's films, with soft, diffused, naturalistic light. The other is the song sequence of popular Hindi cinema, a deliberately stylized world with dancers, movement, and spectacle, such as the dance on a moving train in Chaiyya Chaiyya.

6 Lamps are aimed at a white cloth so that the light spreads softly, like daylight. This diffused light looks natural and unforced, so it suits realistic stories and fits Ray's love of naturalistic light.

7 Bong drew a storyboard for every shot of Parasite, built the film's two houses from scratch, and used staircases as a repeated motif. Park's Oldboy has a hallway fight of about three minutes that appears to be one unbroken shot, which suggests careful design.

8 Open answer. Strong answers use Ozu (a style called distinctly Japanese that was inspired by an American film), Lubezki (a Mexican cinematographer winning Oscars for Hollywood films), Mitra (a stills photographer shaping Indian screen style), and Bordwell's point that continuity principles are shared worldwide.

9 Open answer. A strong answer notes that the ending invites the reader to test the ideas rather than accept them, and that the writer is careful not to overclaim. Other explanations include budget, available technology, an individual director's taste, and the audience's expectations.

10 False. The reading says Coutard shot Breathless with a light handheld camera and mostly natural light.

11 No. The writer says these accents are tendencies, not borders, and that film cultures are porous.

12 Best answer: to make a general idea feel familiar. The scene starts from an experience many readers have had. Accept a reasoned answer, but the writer does not argue that Hollywood is better.

Notes on the Evidence

- Shot length (paragraph 2). The figure comes from Cutting, Brunick, DeLong, Iricinschi and Candan (2011), i-Perception 2:569-576, which measured 160 English-language films, mostly American and mostly high-grossing, from 1935 to 2010: average shot length about 10 seconds in the 1930s and 1940s, below 4 seconds after 2000. Secondary reports quote about 12 seconds in 1930 falling to about 2.5 seconds (Cutting citing Barry Salt's larger data set). The reading uses the primary figures. Bordwell (2007) says averages of 2 to 4 seconds are common today. Continuity editing: Bordwell dates the synthesis to the late 1910s and says mass-audience films worldwide still follow it (blog entry, 2007). That is one scholar's argument, and the entry is old.
- Europe (paragraph 3). Coutard shot Breathless handheld with a light Eclair Cameflex, mostly in available light, on a small budget (Film Comment; No Film School; Guardian obituary reported by Scroll). One memorial tribute says he also used portable lamps bounced off ceilings, so the reading says mostly natural light. Film Comment gives 1959 for the shoot and the film was released in 1960; the reading gives the release year. Dogme 95 was announced on March 13, 1995 by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, joined by Kristian Levring and Soren Kragh-Jacobsen. The Vow of Chastity has ten rules. It allows a single lamp attached to the camera, so no special lighting is slightly simplified. Vinterberg confessed to using a prop and covering a window in The Celebration, and von Trier admitted using music in The Idiots (second source only; confirm if the detail is needed).
- India (paragraph 4). Counts of Indian feature films vary by source and definition: press reports say 1,500 to 2,000 a year, a 2024 government note says over 3,000 films in more than 40 languages, and certification data for 2015 to 2016 show 1,902 digital features. The reading says only usually counted as the largest producer. Mitra is widely credited with bounce lighting on the Apu films; sources differ on whether the first use was Pather Panchali or Aparajito, and Ray's own account is the main evidence, so the reading says widely credited. Sivan (Hollywood Reporter India, 2025) says he used one light inside a tunnel, otherwise natural light, and shot the song in two days; another source says four and a half days, and he says the dancers were in harnesses but the two leads were not. The reading reports only that he says what you see is what was filmed. The point about critics and song sequences is a fair summary of writers such as Himal's essay and academic work on Hindi cinema, not one study.
- Korea (paragraph 5). The claim that Bong storyboarded every shot comes from the publisher's description of his 2020 storyboard book. The houses were built from scratch on outdoor lots (South China Morning Post, citing other interviews); Bong called the film a staircase movie. The Oldboy hallway fight is about three minutes and appears to be a single side-tracking shot. A DVD review reports that the commentary mentions 17 takes and some digital correction, so the reading says appears. Directors are named as examples; the reading does not claim all Korean cinema looks this way.
- Japan, Mexico, and others (paragraph 6). Ebert says Ozu's camera is usually about three feet above the floor, almost never moves, and moves once in Tokyo Story. Wikipedia says Ozu often broke the 180-degree rule and that Tokyo Story was inspired by the 1937 American film Make Way for Tomorrow (not checked in a primary source). Scholars debate how far the low camera is a Japanese cultural choice; one account says Ozu joked that it was convenient. The reading says often called distinctly Japanese. Lubezki won three consecutive Oscars for Gravity, Birdman, and The Revenant (ceremonies of 2014, 2015, 2016; the first cinematographer to do so, Variety). The ASC describes his natural light and long takes. That the three films came from Hollywood studios was not checked in a source here.
- Not covered: Hong Kong, Iran, Nigeria, China, and many others. Style claims in the reading are tendencies, and several are attributed to individual filmmakers rather than whole industries. Nothing in the reading is dated as current.