Jodie Foster Teaches Filmmaking

Introduction

Jodie Foster Biography

Jodie Foster's stunning performances as a rape survivor in *The Accused* (1988) and as Special Agent Clarice Starling (1991) in the hit thriller *The Silence of the Lambs* earned her two Academy Awards for Best Actress and a reputation as one of the most critically acclaimed actresses of her generation.

Jodie made her acting debut at age three, appearing as The Coppertone Girl in the sunscreen brand's television commercials. She became a regular on several television series, including *Mayberry R.F.D.*, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, *My Three Sons*, and *Paper Moon* before landing her first feature film role in *Napoleon and Samantha* (1972)—when she was only eight years old.

Following a notable role in Martin Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1975), Jodie worked with the director again in 1976's *Taxi Driver*. She won widespread critical praise, international attention, and her first Oscar nomination for her breakthrough performance as a streetwise teenager in the award-winning psychological thriller. Other select motion picture credits include Woody Allen's stylized black and white comedy *Shadows and Fog* (1991); Roman Polanski's comedy *Carnage* (2011), Neil Jordan's *The Brave One* (2007), Spike Lee's blockbuster bank heist *Inside Man* (2006) with Denzel Washington and Clive Owen, and Claude Chabrol's *The Blood of Others* (1984), for which multilingual Jodie looped all of her own dialogue in French.

In total, Jodie has appeared in more than 40 films and received many prestigious awards and honors. In 2013, she was presented with the Cecil B. DeMille Award from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for Lifetime Achievement.

In addition to her acting, Jodie has always had a keen interest in the art of filmmaking. She made her motion picture directorial debut in 1991 with the highly-acclaimed *Little Man Tate*. Jodie founded her production company, Egg Pictures, in 1992; with the company, she produced, directed, and acted in several award-winning films, including *Nell* (1994), for which she received an Academy Award nomination. More recently, Jodie directed the thriller *Money Monster* (2016), which starred George Clooney, Julia Roberts, and Jack O'Connell.

Jodie has also directed notable episodes of several highly-acclaimed Netflix series: *Orange is the New Black, House of Cards,* and *Black Mirror*. She graduated with honors from Yale University in 1985, earning a B.A. in literature.

Filmography (Director)

Money Monster (2016)
The Beaver (2011)
Home for the Holidays (1995)
Little Man Tate (1991)

Filmography (Actor)

Hotel Artemis (2018)
Elysium (2013)
Carnage (2011)
The Beaver (2011)
Motherhood (2009)
Nim's Island (2008)
The Brave One (2007)
Inside Man (2006)
Flightplan (2005)
A Very Long Engagement (2004)
The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys (2002)
Panic Room (2002)
Anna and the King (1999)
Contact (1997)
Nell (1994)
Maverick (1994)
Sommersby (1993)
Shadows and Fog (1991)
Little Man Tate (1991)
The Silence of the Lambs (1991)
Catchfire (1990)
Rabbit Ears: The Fisherman and His Wife (1989)
The Accused (1988)
Stealing Home (1988)
Five Corners (1987)
Siesta (1987)
Mesmerized (1986)
The Blood of Others (1984)
The Hotel New Hampshire (1984)
O'Hara's Wife (1982)
Carny (1980)
Foxes (1980)
Candleshoe (1977)
Beach House (1977)
Stop Calling Me Baby! (1977)
The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane (1976)
Freaky Friday (1976)
Bugsy Malone (1976)
Echoes of a Summer (1976)
Taxi Driver (1976)
Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974)
One Little Indian (1973)
Tom Sawyer (1973)
Kansas City Bomber (1972)
Napoleon and Samantha (1972)

Introduction

> One thing that I wish I had learned when I first started as a director was that all I really needed was confidence and a pen and a paper.

Jodie is unique as a filmmaker because she brings the combination of an actor/director perspective. When Jodie was a child actor working on a show called *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, she saw her costar Bill Bixby direct one day. When she realized actors could also be directors, she was inspired to become a filmmaker herself.

Jodie's advice to any aspiring director is to remember that filmmaking in its purest form only really requires a few things: confidence and a pen and a paper. Let go of the need to know everything before embarking on a project, and trust your instincts. Much of what you think you need to know, you will learn along the way.

Video clips from *Money Monster* and *Taxi Driver* courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

Hopefully, as you explore this class and learn from Jodie's experiences, you will be inspired to create a work of art that is unique to you. And, through developing your own style and voice, you will find a way to connect with an audience through your work—which is the ultimate goal of filmmaking.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Acquire a journal to keep for the duration of Jodie's MasterClass. For your first entry, set a timer for 15-20 minutes to freely write about what you love, what kinds of stories you are drawn to, and why you want to tell those stories. You can use bullet points and make a literal list of each thing, or simply use this as a prompt to begin writing. No need to read through once you've written, but this will serve as a useful guidepost for other exercises in this class.

Finding Your Personal Story

Finding Your Personal Story

> If you can understand why something moves you, or even without understanding, if you can experience being moved, then you can move somebody else.

Filmmaking is important because films move people and make them want to be better versions of themselves. In order to move an audience, you have to be able to identify what moves you. In order to figure out what moves you, consider the following questions:

What inspires you?

What interests you?

What are you passionate about?

What obsesses you?

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Jodie is personally moved by the sight of two people dancing because it's about two opposites coming together. Spend time with the questions above and free write about them. Reflect on your writings and try to synthesize them into simple themes that move you, like Jodie's idea of merging opposites.

> There are a lot of themes that I go back to. There are patterns in my life. There are things that I keep working out over and over again.

Throughout her directing career, Jodie has explored a number of recurring themes:

- ***Little Man Tate:*** family, loneliness, spiritual crisis
- ***Home for the Holidays:*** family, spiritual crisis
- ***The Beaver:*** family, spiritual crisis
- ***Money Monster:*** failure

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Choose three directors whose work you want to study closely. In your notebook, list your favorite films by each director and identify the themes in each one. Does a pattern emerge?

> Producers are looking for that extra special thing that makes you more qualified than somebody else. What is that thing in a pitch that you're going to bring to the room that makes them trust you—that makes them feel that you have a strong vision?

When considering a project or being considered for a project as a director, what is most important—perhaps even more so than technical knowledge—is your personal or emotional connection to the material. When a producer hires a director, they are giving them complete artistic control of the project. Until a few years ago, most directors were straight white men, because the straight white male producers who hired them tended to trust people who looked like them. Think about what you bring to the table that would make someone want to trust in you and believe in your vision.

Know that whatever story you decide to tell will change you as you bring it to fruition. Take all the thoughts and feelings that are inside of you and use them; write them down, make choices, and tell your stories.

Exploring the Big Idea in Film

Exploring the Big Idea in Film

> The big idea isn't the plot. It is the story, it's what you're trying to say. The big idea is something that encapsulates the vision of your film in a very simple way, the reason that you are fascinated.

The "big idea" in a film is the overarching message that the filmmaker is trying to convey. (This is not to be confused with the plot of a movie.) A big idea isn't static—it may evolve and change throughout your process.

Examples of the big idea include:

- ***The Piano*** (1993), directed by Jane Campion. The character intentionally cuts the rope and gasps at the end of the film in order to convey that she wants to live.
- ***Taxi Driver*** (1976), directed by Martin Scorsese. Robert DeNiro's line "You talkin' to me?" reflects his character—a man coming back from the war and feeling out of place—and is emblematic of the 1970s.
- ***Money Monster***, directed by Jodie Foster. Kyle is afraid that he is disappointing the women in his life. The idea is crystalized in a scene with his girlfriend, in which he expects her to talk him down, and instead she berates him. This public confrontation confirms that he has failed her.

However, it's not necessary to crystalize the big idea of your film the big idea of your film before you set out to make it or even while you're making it. The big idea will undoubtedly present itself to you along the way, trust your own individual process!

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
One way to develop your understanding of the big idea is to practice identifying big ideas in other films. Return to your list of directors and films that you made in Chapter 2: Finding Your Personal Story. For each film on that list, try to identify the big idea of the film. If a friend asked you what the film was about, how would you describe it in a few words? (Remember: the goal is *not* to describe the plot.) Then notate the moment that you feel expresses it best. This can be a line, like Robert De Niro's in *Taxi Driver*, or a scene, as in *Money Monster*.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Big ideas are related to themes. A theme is a broad concept, whereas a big idea is a specific, personal idea within that theme. To begin to cultivate a better understanding of your big ideas, start by identifying three themes that you are drawn to. Reference this list if you need inspiration:

Man vs. nature
Man vs. himself
Loss of innocence
Revenge
Death
Battle / War
Sacrifice
Individual vs. society
Justice
Triumph over adversity
Love
Good vs. evil
Redemption
Resurrection
Prodigal son
Transformation
Jealousy
Friendship
Fate

Free write on each of your three themes for about five minutes. From this free writing, do you see a possible big idea emerge for that theme? (Keep in mind Jodie's *Money Monster* example: From the theme of failure, the big idea emerged: "Men are so afraid of failure that they manifest that fear and end up disappointing people in their lives.")

> You go into a film and you say, 'How could I have done that so that it feels like me?' It's not better. Not, 'How could I have made that movie better?' But, 'How could I make that movie fit some of the things that I want to say?

CREATIVE EXERCISE::
Watch a film—one you either love or hate— and reimagine it so that it resonates more personally with you. What would you change to make the film say what you want it to say? Note that this is not a qualitative judgment—you're not changing it to make it "better." You're asking yourself what you would change to make it feel like *you*. Refer to the example Jodie offers in the video lesson for guidance.

- ***The Martian*** (2015): Instead of making it a movie about a man trapped in space and trying to get home, Jodie is more interested in examining the spiritual crisis he might be going through—and what makes him want to keep living. She would want to explore this from Matt Damon's character's perspective, rather than the omniscient perspective used in the film. The exploration of a character's psyche is much more aligned with the themes that Jodie is usually drawn to.

Jodie's Short Film: Building Your Story Into a Screenplay, Part 1

Jodie's Short Film: Building Your Story Into a Screenplay, Part 1

> I love the challenge of playing the one thing on the outside, and then showing you the little bits and pieces of the stuff that's on the inside, and then the unconscious stuff that even I don't understand.

Inspiration for a film or scene can come from anywhere. Here, Jodie translates an unforgettable emotional experience into a dramatic scene with Scott Frank, the screenwriter of *Little Man Tate, Get Short*, and *Minority Report*.

Jodie's personal experience:
When her son had his tonsils taken out, he had to go under anesthesia. As Jodie watched him go under, she could tell that he didn't know what was happening. Seeing the look on his face in that moment, she felt as if she had betrayed her son.

Jodie and Scott's adaption:
A mother (Amy) is in the hospital with her son (Lucas), who has suddenly fallen ill. To create more tension and conflict, Jodie chose to not base Amy's character on herself. Rather, she created backstory in which Amy has done time in jail. Her unseemly past will be revealed to the audience as the scene progresses and she will be confronted with a choice at the end.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Think about a moment from your life that really stands out for you, and that includes at least one other person—perhaps something that stirs up some strong emotion like Jodie's event did for her. Set a timer for 10 minutes and write freely about this moment. What emotions are connected to this event?

As you begin to work on any script, you'll need to work through research, character, structure, and tone. For this scene, Jodie did the following:

1. **Research:** Dig into the facts to ensure believability and heighten tension. For this scene, Jodie spoke to the same nurse who had originally cared for her son during his operation to ascertain the following:

- ***Time of day:*** These procedures usually take place early in the morning.

- ***Visitor rules:*** Visitors are allowed, but only one person at a time.

- ***How anesthesia is administered:*** Usually the child is asked to count down from ten, and the IV is inserted via a fairly large needle once the child is completely knocked out.

2. **Character: Consider where your characters are coming from.** What world did each of your characters inhabit before they come together in a scene? In Jodie's scene, Amy's world is prison and Lucas's world is his grandparents' home.

3. **Character: Create multi-dimensional characters.** Dig into your characters' motivations to make them more complex. In Jodie's scene, Scott points out that Amy could come across as either vulnerable or bad-ass. As an actor, Jodie is drawn to playing characters that are showing one thing, but feeling another, so she would like the character to ultimately be both things at once.

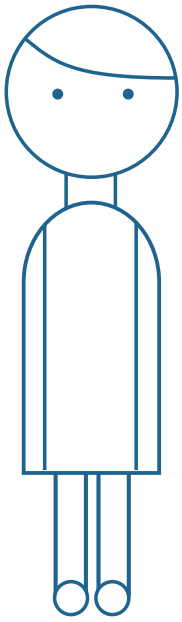
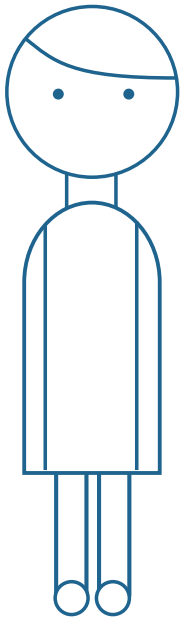
4. **Structure:** Think strategically about how you reveal information to the audience. Jodie and Scott do not let the audience know that Lucas has been living a life without his mother until a few minutes into the scene, when the boy asks "Where are grandma and grandpa?".

5. **Tone:** Be specific with the feeling that you are trying to evoke from the audience. Jodie has the idea for Amy's phone to be ringing while the nurse is asking her questions. This will create a sense of urgency. From that, Scott suggests that they don't reveal that the scene is in a hospital until a few lines in to set the tone for what might seem like an interrogation, putting the audience into Amy's world.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Begin to brainstorm a scene based on the personal experience you free-wrote about above. Print and use the sheet on the following page to create an outline.

Then, write it as a short scene. Aim for about four pages. Unless you're already familiar with screenwriting, don't worry about the correct formatting or terminology and just write it to the best of your ability. Reflect on the emotions that are connected to it. How can you layer them into the scene?

Fill in the basic information about your characters.

	CHARACTER 1	CHARACTER 2	
Name			Name
Age			Age
Occupation			Occupation
Desires			Desires
Obstacles			Obstacles
Strengths			Strengths
Weaknesses			Weaknesses

Relationship

Describe what happens in the scene.

Timeline: Fill in important events leading up to your scene:

Environment: What does the environment look like, feel like, smell like? List any colors that come to mind, feelings that the space evokes, etc.

Creating the Vision for Your Film

Creating the Vision for Your Film

> At a young age, I think I really just wanted to be very clear on what the basics were of what I was looking for. And that clarity is very helpful for a crew.

As you start to develop your film and hire a team, it's important to develop a few different languages so that you can communicate your vision in the best way possible:

Visual
Sound
Musical

Jodie prefers to first communicate her ideas in terms of emotion. For example, "I want a feeling of the character being isolated." This language transcends the more technical and specific language needed to communicate with individual crew members. Then they can translate it into their own languages—into lens choices, lighting, music, etc. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed, come back to the basic question: "Is this what I believe?"

Pulling reference images can help you articulate your vision to your crew—anything that expresses your color palette or desired framing. You can also use other films as reference.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Return to the list of three directors that you made, and select one film that stands out to you visually. Look up the film's Director of Photography, and research their body of work. Identify what it is specifically about their style—perhaps it's framing, lighting, or both—that attracts your eye, and take specific notes about stylistic elements you might ask your own DP to employ.

CREATIVE EXERCISE:
Establish a visual language for your scene by creating a lookbook. Source about 20 reference images—they don't have to be directly associated with it, but rather apply to framing, locations, and color palette. You can also use clips from other films that you find online for reference. Compile your images in a notebook, on posterboard, or using a digital tool like Evernote or Pinterest.

> What you're looking for is how you're going to have a conversation with this person. And is it somebody that you're going to wanna spend time in the trenches with? Is it somebody who's going to be scared to tell you no?

Generally, you will assemble your team in this order:

- **Line Producer:** Manages the budget and schedule.
- **Production Designer:** Translates the film into visual form (settings, costumes, makeup, etc.).
- **Location Manager:** Finds and secures all the locations, takes care of permits.
- **Director of Photography (DP):** Works closely with the director to determine the look of the film, lighting, and framing. The DP will also act as the camera operator on more low budget productions. Also referred to as a cinematographer.

After you've gone through and discussed all your ideas with each of your key crew members, make a scene-by-scene list documenting all of your decisions. You can print this list and give it to your lead crew members. (However, keep in mind that all of these ideas are subject to change, even on the day of, so be flexible!)

Jodie's list from *Little Man Tate* is available for download on the Resources page.

Remember: Every choice you make is meaningful. For example, you use a certain lens for a reason, or you may choose a specific type of lighting for a reason. As a filmmaker, you are creating a visual story from beginning to end. A lot of the decisions that you make will be instinctual—and that's fine, as long as they are aligned with the story that you're trying to tell.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Use Jodie's notes from *Little Man Tate* as a thought-starter about notes you'd like to make prior to shooting your scene. Then, when you're ready to plan a shoot of your own, print and use the template sheet on the final page of this chapter.

Film Crew Roles

Executive Producer (EP): Generally assists in financing the production, but may also oversee production.

Producer: Manages the production/production team. There are different types of producers—financial, marketing, and creative, just to name a few.

Line Producer: Manages the budget and schedule.

Production Manager (PM): Oversees daily production decisions such as budget, scheduling, and staffing. The PM generally reports to the line producer and supervises the production coordinator.

Production Coordinator: Coordinates all logistics involved with the cast, crew, and equipment.

Production Designer: Translates the film into visual form (settings, costumes, makeup, etc.).

Art Director: Works with production designer, designs and dresses sets, acquires props, etc. and helps determine the overall look. On a smaller crew, this is also the Set Designer.

Location Manager: Finds and secures all the locations, takes care of permits.

First Assistant Director (1st AD): Prepares the shooting schedule, organizes the crew, and ensures that the film comes in on schedule.

Second Assistant Director (2nd AD): Helps the 1st AD supervise the set and also manages and hands out important documents like scripts and call sheets. Depending on the size of the crew, there may even be a 3rd AD.

Director of Photography (DP): Works closely with the director to determine the look of the film, lighting, and framing. The DP will also act as the camera operator on more low budget productions. Also referred to as a cinematographer.

First Assistant Camera (1st AC): Ensures every shot is clear and in focus; often the focus puller. On smaller productions, the camera operator (or the DP) will also handle this job.

Second Assistant Camera (2nd AC): In charge of the slate (shot number, take number, etc.) and holds it in front of the camera before each shot.

Production Sound Mixer: Ensures the sound is properly recorded and mixed on set. They also select microphones, operate sound recording devices, and sometimes mix audio signals.

Boom Operator: Holds the boom microphone and is responsible for mic placement and movement during filming. They make sure the mic doesn't show up in the shot. On smaller sets, the production sound mixer might do this job.

Key Grip: Works with the DP and oversees all on-set equipment, like camera cranes, dollies, lights, and platforms.

Gaffer or Chief Lighting Technician: Designs and executes the lighting plan on set and works closely with the DP.

Visual/Special Effects Supervisor: Oversees both creative and technical elements for the visual effects on a project.

Music Supervisor: Helps choose what music will accompany the film. Also, generally helps find a composer and/or manage any music licensing.

Props Master: In charge of finding and keeping track of all the props that appear on screen to add authenticity.

Makeup Artist: Chooses and applies appropriate makeup to the actors.

Hairdresser: Styles the actors' hair and is responsible for upkeep. On a low-budget production, the makeup artist and hairdresser is usually one and the same.

Costume Designer: Creates costumes in keeping with the characters and setting.

Production Assistant (PA): Helps out in numerous ways, from paperwork to going on runs and picking up props and coffee.

Scene by Scene

SCENE TITLE / NUMBER:

CAMERA

What shots are happening:

What is the mood?

What lenses are used?

A.D.

Weather concerns?

Time of day / natural light concerns?

Background actors needed?

SOUND

Noisy location?

Music?

Other concerns?

SCRIPT

Continuity concerns?

Entrances:

Exits:

ART DEPT

Production design or prop needs?

NOTES

Deconstructing Visual Choices: *The Beaver*

Deconstructing Visual Choices: *The Beaver*

TERMS

Storyboard: A sequence of drawings, typically with some directions and dialogue, representing the shots planned for a film.

Coverage: Amount of footage shot and camera angles used to capture a scene.

Boom up/down: A directive that indicates where the boom (mic) will be placed in the scene.

Anamorphic lens: A compound lens or system of lenses that compresses the camera image in the horizontal direction during filming, so that a wide-screen image can fit on the width of conventional 35mm film.

Pan: Indicates a stationary camera that pivots back and forth, or up and down.

Jodie worked with a storyboard artist to plan out the scene in The Beaver where Walter tries to commit suicide. Study those storyboards, available for download on the Class Resources page, and see how Jodie chose to represent the answers to the following key questions:

- **What is the tone of the piece?** *The Beaver* is a black comedy, but the concept of suicide is still very serious. Jodie balanced the tone of this scene by opting for close-ups that focused on Walter's pained facial expressions and his feet as he made his way over the tub. Jodie deliberately avoided isolating Walter in a wide frame, since that would feel too lonely, too serious.

- **Whose point of view is the story told from?** While Walter is a main character, *The Beaver* is actually told through the beaver puppet's perspective. Think of where a puppet would be in relation to a human body. Jodie chose both high and low shots to express the story through the puppet's point of view, keeping in mind that the camera coverage would come from the left, since the puppet was always on Walter's left hand.

TYPES OF SHOTS

Pull back: Type of shot in which the camera physically moves away from the subject to reveal the full context of the scene.

Push in: Type of shot in which the camera physically moves toward or zooms in to the subject or object for a closer look.

Wide (WS)/long (LS): Shot that captures as much of the setting as possible, usually used as an establishing shot.

Medium close-up (MED CU): Halfway between a medium shot and a close-up. Generally captures the subject from the waist up.

Close-up (CU): Frames the head, neck, and sometimes the shoulders.

Extreme Close-Up (ECU): More intense version of a CU, usually showing only the eyes or other part of the face.

Top: High angle or crane shot where the camera is looking down on the subject.

Tight: Shot where the camera is closer to the subject.

Insert: Generally a close-up shot that focuses on a specific detail. These shots may be written into a screenplay, but most often will be called for by the director.

Over-the-shoulder (OTS): Literally shot over the shoulder of the character from behind.

Reaction: Shot that cuts away from the scene in order to show the character's reaction to it.

- **Which transitions will have the best effect?** Jodie wanted to break up the tense moment with a close-up shot of the shower rod, leading to a full pan up Walter's body as he dragged it. Discuss the shots with your DP and make sure to storyboard, but it's also good to capture ample coverage as options for when you get into the editing room. you want to make sure you have a variety of shots to choose from, so get ample coverage where it's necessary and depending on what you've discussed with your DP.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:

Print the storyboard template provided at the end of this chapter. Using your script, storyboard your ideas. Don't worry about being a good artist here, it's more about having an idea of how you envision each moment framed on camera, while also keeping everything in sequence. If you chose not to write a script, just for practice, storyboard a moment from your life that you wrote about in Chapter 4: Jodie's Short Film: Building Your Story Into a Screenplay, Part 1.

As Jodie built out the sequence for this scene in *The Beaver*, she had to apply rewrites to the script, and she included what they would need for stunts. Any rewrites should be given to your crew as soon as possible. Always keep your crew informed to the best of your ability. You want them to be able to come to set with all the information they need to best execute the shots you've prepared.

READING LIST

Storyboarding Essentials: How to Translate Your story to the Screen for Film, TV, and Other Media by David Harland Rousseau and Benjamin Reid Phillips, Watson-Guptill, 2013. This book offers a more in-depth look at the craft, including continuity and camera angles as they pertain to storyboards.

SCENE :

SCENE :

SCENE :

SCENE :

SCENE :

SCENE :

Jodie's Short Film: Building Your Story Into a Screenplay, Part 2

Jodie's Short Film: Building Your Story Into a Screenplay, Part 2

> The decisions that you make as a filmmaker help guide the audience in the direction that you're hoping for—but not in a way that feels manipulative or artificial.

TERMS

Smash cut: A technique in which one scene abruptly cuts to another for aesthetic, narrative, or emotional purpose. Usually occurs as a pivotal moment where a cut normally would not happen, also known as a jump cut.

Voice-over (VO): A piece of disembodied narration or dialogue in a movie. The speaker is not visible on screen.

Download the second draft of the screenplay from the Class Resources page to track Scott's rewrites.

As you revise your script, aim to achieve the following:

1. **Research: Dig even deeper into the details.** To further develop the scene, Jodie went back to the hospital to get the details right. She leveraged what she learned to revise the dialogue and action.

- Once Jodie better understood the paperwork process, she revised the opening. The nurse now refers to a form that is almost completely filled out except for an address. When she asks for the mother Amy's address, the audience is clued in that perhaps something is off.

- Jodie learned that one of the primary reasons a child would get a tonsillectomy is that they keep getting sick over and over again—they can't get rid of the infection. This helps Jodie legitimize why the characters come to the emergency room. She revises Amy's line from "It was a fucking emergency" to "He keeps getting sick."

- Jodie learned that only one person is allowed in the recovery room at a time after the tonsillectomy, and used this to create a moment of tension in which the grandmother must agree to leave the room and let Amy go in.

2. **Character: Build out your characters.** Jodie fills out her characters and their worlds in subtle ways throughout the scene.

- Amy's character has an interchange with the nurse. The nurse has to ask Amy twice about her son being on medication, which makes Amy feel like the nurse doesn't trust her. This provokes her, and adds emotional complexity to her character based on her difficult past.

- Jodie gives us a peek into the son Lucas's world by having him talk about his grandmother snoring—revealing that he's been living with his grandparents instead of his mother.

- Jodie hints at Amy's estranged relationship with her parents in the way Amy asks about her father ("What, Dad is here too?"), and subtle but cutting remarks her mother makes about her ("All you ever do is make things worse.").

3. **Structure: Cut redundancies.** Jodie trims material from the script that is redundant or unnecessary. Information only needs to be revealed once—so she cuts a few lines about the length of the procedure, as we find out that the procedure is short later on. Jodie also cuts a spoken line in favor of having the moment played silently by the actor for more impact.

4. **Structure: Have a beginning, middle, and end.** Even though the scene you've created might just be a part of a bigger screenplay, it should have a definitive beginning, middle, and end. Each scene throughout a full-length story has its own miniature arc. In this case, Scott talks about Amy's journey having a beginning, middle, and end: She wants to do a good thing (take Lucas to get surgery) to avoid a bad thing (her past), only to get rejected (by her parents), and then she ends up choosing the bad thing anyway.

5. **Tone: You're not bound to reality.** Even though Jodie's scene is set in the ER, Scott is willing to sacrifice some of the real aspects of that world in order to prioritize the character's journey. If the audience isn't taken out of the world of the scene, then ultimately the details of the external world don't matter. For example, the space of an ER in reality might be be noisier and more hectic with people running into each other and yelling. But because those details don't serve the story that they are trying to tell, they agree to cut them.

> We're unfortunately not showing you that part of the process where you look at the pages and you're like, 'This sucks.' Rip it in half and start all over again.

Revision process and final notes.

Writing a screenplay is challenging and may require many different drafts. Allow yourself time for this part of the process.

Scott recommends taking a pass through your script for each of the following:

1. Go line by line, looking for lines that could be cut in favor of the actor conveying the same intention with a simple look. Remember, less is more!

2. Track the characters and what their motivations are. Ask yourself: Are they behaving in way that is authentic to them in every situation? Are they being true to who you've defined?

3. Take note of your transitions, check your pacing, and solidify your visual ideas for the script. If you're not the one directing, have a discussion with your director about what their visual ideas and transition ideas are so you can begin to incorporate them. Your visual ideas can also be revisited or added to the lookbook you've created from Chapter 5.

4. Look for emotional resonance. Ask yourself: Do I have a well-defined character with a clear point of view? Does it resonate emotionally for me? Do I understand the tone of the piece?

READING LIST

- ***Story*** by Robert McKee, HarperCollins, 1997. A classic reference book for screenwriters. McKee revisits and explores basic terminology like beats, scenes, and climax to break down and demystify the structure of screenwriting. He also breaks down scenes from classic cinema like *Casablanca* and *Chinatown* and shows why they work. Chapter 17 is devoted entirely to character, and can help you flesh out that aspect of your screenplay.

- ***Save the Cat!*** by Blake Snyder, 2005. An accessible book that helps first-time writers begin understanding screenplay structure. Though this book is geared toward features, you can apply broad lessons about narrative structure to the mini-arcs inside your scene or short film.

Jodie's Short Film: The Screenwriter-Director Collaboration

Jodie's Short Film: The Screenwriter-Director Collaboration

> Inexperienced writer/directors tend to feel like the movie is the idea that they had in their hotel room when they were all by themselves. Especially writers who are really used to sitting in a room and typing all by themselves, and laughing hysterically at what they've written. But movies don't work that way; there are 125 people [involved].

The writer/director collaboration is an essential part of the filmmaking process. As you embark on a collaboration with a writer, consider discussing the following with them:

- **Character:** Who the characters are, their relationship to one another, and their journey throughout the script.
- **Tone:** What is the genre and what is the mood/atmosphere?
- **Structure:** Does the progression of the story and the events within make sense to both of you?

As you discuss these ideas, it's important for both parties to remain open and to listen. For example, though Scott might immediately disagree with an idea, he will listen. Keeping an open mind keeps the spirit of collaboration and creativity alive—and will hopefully be more productive.

From an actor/director perspective, Jodie notices when writers get caught in dialogue and structure. Writers want to attach to structure and logic; but often movies are actually about behavior, not dialogue. Human behavior isn't always logical.

Scott reminds her that with screenwriting, the only two senses you have to work with are sight and sound—what the scene looks like, and what the characters say. However, when actors come into play, the addition of behavior and subtraction of lines will naturally become more apparent. Trying things without dialogue is almost always worth a shot.

The collaboration will continue to evolve as you add members to your crew. But the discussion never stops. Though it will hopefully be a healthy give and take, do speak up about what matters to you. Essentially, filmmaking is a group of artists trying to interpret each other through words, emotions, camera angles, lighting, and set design. Feeling out of balance as your project evolves is part of the process, and it takes practice.

Jodie's Short Film: Constructing a Scene

Jodie's Short Film: Constructing a Scene

> That pretty much is directing: having a vision and being able to articulate that to others so that they can climb on and collaborate with your vision.

TERMS
Dolly: A cart on which a camera is mounted that travels along tracks. Used for steady moving shots. Can also refer to in-and-out movement (i.e. closer/further away from the subject), and movement from side to side.

Jodie works a little differently than most directors because she grew up working in front of the camera. In order to construct her shot list, she imagines herself as the actor in the scene to get an idea of the different camera angles. She also doesn't usually storyboard unless it's for a complicated sequence or stunt scene. Everyone's process will be different, so it's good to experiment to figure out what works best for you. The most important thing you can do is to stay flexible and open-minded with whatever happens on your shoot day—because things will change.

To ensure that she is as prepared as possible for her shoot day, Jodie takes her time to map out the following elements:

- **Shot list:** Jodie uses one frame with the subject to detail the different types of shots that will be utilized (close-up to medium to wide, etc.). She only moves on to the next frame when the subject of the shot changes. Be sure to notate the line that you want to end the series of shots on.

- **Extras:** Extras often appear in wide shots that establish your location. Anything to do with directing extras is generally discussed with your

TERMS CONT.

Handheld: Technique in which a camera is held in the camera operator's hands as opposed to being mounted on a tripod or another base.

Hard Cut: The change from one scene to another without any transition effects in between.

Direct to Camera: A device Jodie likes to use, when a character is looking directly at the camera. It's interesting and unexpected, but can be jarring for the audience.

Screen Direction: The direction an actor or object moves in relation to the position of the camera.

Static Camera: Any shot in which the camera does not move.

Single: Shot with only one subject in the frame.

Match Cut: A cut from one shot to another where the two shots are matched by the action or subject and subject matter to produce a seamless effect from frame to frame.

Practical Lights: Light sources that are visible as models within your scene. Indoor examples of practical lights include lamps, light fixtures, and television sets.

AD, including their movement in a scene (when they are crossing), what they're wearing, what kind of people they are, and whether the group is diverse or not.

- **Camera movement:** Think about the feeling you want to create with camera movement. For example, a handheld camera will give a little more movement and sense of feeling uncontrolled, whereas a steadicam will make things look smoother and more controlled. Whatever you choose, it's important to be consistent within the flow of your different shots so that they can fit together as seamlessly as possible. This is also something you can discuss more in-depth with your DP if you're not sure.

- **Screen direction:** Your DP will be helpful with screen direction. The direction of movement must be consistent for the editing process to work later on.

- **Options for the edit room:** Shoot the scene on at least two sizes. Jodie gives the example of shooting a medium shot and a tighter medium (or medium close-up). This will give you more options later when you're editing.

To communicate all of this information to her team, Jodie also makes a rough sketch of the set and diagrams all the camera angles in the entirety of the scene. She then makes a shot list below the sketch. This gives more precise direction to the various members of her crew. For example:

- **Gaffer:** What part of the space needs to be lit and where do the the practical lights go?

- **Production Design:** What set pieces do you need? What walls will be visible and need to be decorated accordingly?

- **Sound:** Where can the boom be held in each shot?
- **Electric:** Where is the most efficient place for equipment and wires?
- **Costume Design:** How many extras will be visible and how should they be dressed?
- **AD:** Where do the extras go? What do they do in the scene?

One of Jodie's shot lists is available for download on the Class Resources page.

> The more you engage in communication, the more they'll be able to deliver in their language—whether it's the language of props, the language of costumes, or the language of cinematography.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
Practice thinking like a filmmaker and make a rough shot list using Jodie's process. Use your storyboards and jot the shots you envision down next to each frame. Notate what line in the script you'd like each series of shots to end on. Take it a step further and sketch out your set as Jodie demonstrates. Using the shot list you've created, go through and notate all your shots and the camera angles you have used numerically.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Rewatch the film you chose from Chapter 5: Creating the Vision for Your Film—the one that inspires your own style—and pay attention to the framing and types of shots that are utilized. Go through the film scene by scene and note the following:

Types of shots that are used?

Steadicam vs. handheld?

The emotion that each shot evokes in you?

READING LIST

- *Film Directing Shot by Shot* by Steven D. Katz, Michael Wiese Productions, 1991.
- *The Filmmaker's Eye: Learning (and Breaking) the Rules of Cinematic Composition* by Gustavo Mercado, Focal Press, 2010.
- *Cinematography: Theory and Practice* by Blain Brown, Focal Press, 2011.

Prepping and Scheduling

Prepping and Scheduling

> I'm always aware of scheduling, because it's going to impact my performances, it's going to impact my day. It's going to impact whether I get the footage that I want.

Even though it might not seem like a creative part of the process, scheduling actually allows for more creativity. When you give yourself ample time to prep, your shoot days will feel smoother and you will end up saving time. Generally in the prep process, you will get together ahead of time with your producers and the writer. The clock isn't running, so take advantage of that time when you don't have to pay your crew!

Jodie's sample schedule is available for download on the Resources page.

A 1st AD will help keep you on schedule on shoot days. They will also help monitor the actors and their needs as they prepare on set. Remember: the actors' moment in front of the camera is why you're all set up and ready to shoot. Your AD will make sure they have what they need to prepare and feel comfortable.

Consider your actors as you determine your shooting order. It's not helpful to have an actor perform their most emotional scene on the first day of production. You need to give them time to ease into the world of the film, so try not to schedule this kind of scene on day one.

> If you can listen to your 1st AD, and you have a 1st AD that's conscious and is a solid filmmaker as well as a solid technician, then you'll be able to get your day.

> One of the things that I think is very helpful in prep is to do a table read. It's inexpensive. People love doing it. And you get to hear your film from beginning to end.

A table read is a common part of the rehearsal process. The director, actors, producers, and others sit around a large table and read through the script. The actors are already cast at this point, and usually someone is designated to read stage directions. Table reads are a great way to hear your film, maybe multiple times if you can. This will help with pacing and character, and will perhaps inspire rewrites if you hear things that aren't working.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:
For some guidance on how to hold a table read of your own, set up a time to read through either a full-length script you may have or just a short scene with a few trusted friends. If you haven't cast actors yet, cast your friends to the best of your ability, instruct someone to read stage directions, and invite others to be there only as listeners. At the end of the read, facilitate a discussion of your script. Everyone can act as a producer and give feedback. Ask your friends:

- What really worked?
- What really didn't work?
- What is the weakest part of the script?
- For a deeper dive with the experience of a table read, this article from *Script Magazine* offers a few more tips.

This can be a vulnerable thing to do, but it's in your best interest to have some outside opinions before you start shooting. It's human nature to hold onto things that feel safe. Try to develop an awareness of when/if you're doing this. If you can, be adaptable in the moment with any preconceived decisions you may have about your script, whether it's during the rewriting process or during a shoot day.

MORE INFORMATION ON BUDGETING

Though a line producer is usually responsible for budgeting, it's important for directors to have some basic knowledge and understanding about budgeting. Review LA/NY's synopsis of how to create a film budget. Additionally, use this sample budget for reference.

READING LIST

- *Scheduling and Budgeting Your Film*, Paula Landry, Focal Press, 2011. For more information on scheduling and budgeting, this book offers a comprehensive look inside the industry.

Casting

Casting

> Casting your movie I would say is the most important thing because there are a lot of choices that you can change in the moment. There are a lot of decisions that you can make and remake over time. But with an actor, you've chosen a human being who comes with a whole history of possibility and impossibilities.

As a filmmaker, you can change many of your decisions along the way, but casting is the least flexible in terms of making last-minute changes. Before you cast an actor, it's important that you speak the same language and that the actor understands the story you're telling. Also, the actor who you cast should be someone who you trust to prepare the role to the best of their ability, who is also willing to be flexible and collaborate with you. As a director, you can help shape an actor's performance, but when you're on set, you will not be able to change their performance entirely, so make sure you're both on the same page with who the character is and what they want in each scene.

Jodie finds inspiration when she hears actors saying the words aloud. Auditions give her insight about her dialogue and what works or doesn't work. So don't worry if you don't have a strong sense of what kind of actor you're looking for as you prep your script.

What's important in an audition for directors:

- Can the actor take notes?
- What do they naturally bring to the table?
- Can the actor change and how do they change?
- Is the actor flustered when you give them an adjustment?
- Can they simply add to their performance instead of starting from scratch?

What's important in an audition for actors:

- Know your lines to the best of your ability.
- Always hold your sides in an audition in case you go up.
- Come in with a well-rounded, fleshed-out character.
- Come in with bold and smart choices.
- Be flexible when the director gives you notes.
- Ask any questions that are unclear to you before you begin.
- Relax as much as possible and be yourself. Remember, they need you!

Learn to really pay attention and listen to your instincts. If you can't take your eyes off of an actor, if you are fascinated by them, trust that. Jodie specifically looks for actors who bring a well-rounded character to their audition, not just what's on the page. She also trusts that if she is moved by an actor, others will be moved too.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Casting often comes down to a quality or energy that an actor has. You can see it as soon as they walk in the audition room or say the first line.

Think about the characters in the short script you wrote. What kinds of qualities would the actors need to bring to those roles? Once you've identified the qualities you'd need, think about actors who possess those qualities. Make a list of three actors for each character. Then, go through and note why you think they'd be right for the part, including references from other work that they've done.

> There's nothing worse on screen than people saying, 'This is how I feel.' You want to see, and you want to show—not hear somebody talk about it. So show, don't tell.

When Jodie began casting for *The Beaver*, she had a very different idea of who Norah's character was. It wasn't until after auditioning hundreds of actors and then finally seeing Jennifer Lawrence's interpretation of the character in her audition that she realized that the script wasn't working. This is a great example of how casting can be extremely helpful in the writing process. Jodie was able to revise the script in order to create a more realistic character.

Ultimately, what worked for Jodie was Jennifer Lawrence's ability to seemingly have a strong understanding of her intellectual herself but no consciousness about her psychology. This ends up being the reason that Porter, one of the other main characters in the film, has to write her valedictory speech. Doing a reworking of the character made space for the rest of the film to make more sense.

CREATIVE EXERCISES

"Show, don't tell." Characters talking about how they feel in a scene is generally not something that works. It can be more creative to focus on the stillness and the actors body language to exhibit these feelings. Sometimes, a stronger choice is actually cutting scenes down to streamline the message. Less is often more, especially in film.

Go through the scene that you've written and look for any places where you could trim down dialogue and show what's going on instead of talking about it. Rewrite these moments.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE:

As she has evolved as a filmmaker, Jodie has cultivated an awareness of when she is making casting decisions out of fear. For example, she may feel afraid to cast an actor because they're too pretty, or because the actor is too bold and they might overwhelm the dynamic. This might feel instinctual, but there is a fine line between trusting your instincts and acting out of fear.

All artists constantly come up against fear. Whether it's a fear of finally making the movie that you've always dreamed of, or a fear of choosing the wrong actor or DP, those fears will keep showing up. What if instead of being blocked by fear in these moments, you made the decision to be curious about them instead? Take some time to write in your journal about three fears that you have in relation to your creative endeavors. Ask yourself:

Why am I afraid of this?

What do I think is standing in my way?

How much of my fear is based in reality and how much is projected?

When Jodie comes up against fear, she talks to a trusted collaborator, like her casting director. Take this exercise a step further and have a discussion with a trusted friend or collaborator about everything you've journaled about. Pick only one of your fears to discuss if that feels easier. Notice how you feel afterwards and journal about anything that changed for you.

READING LIST:

On Casting:

- *How to Audition on Camera: A Hollywood Insider's Guide for Actors* by Sharon Bialy, Tilbury, 2016.
- *Casting Revealed: A Guide for Film Directors* by Hester Schell, Michael Wiese Productions, 2011.

On Fear and Creativity:

- *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* by Elizabeth Gilbert, Penguin, 2015.
- *The War of Art* by Steven Pressfield, Black Irish Books, 2002.

The Acting Process

The Acting Process

> I think the biggest problem directors have with actors is that they just don't understand what acting is. And they try all of these other ways to either prove that they have power over you, or that they know what they're doing, when the truth is that they're just kind of intimidated by the process of what acting is.

There are three layers to acting:

1. What the character is communicating/showing.

2. What the character is hiding.

3. The part of the character that's unconscious, that they don't know is a part of their story.

Actors can work with these layers one at a time or all three things at once. For example, Jodie's character in *Nell* isn't hiding as much, so Jodie mostly played the layer of communicating/showing. For Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs*, all three layers are at play: She's communicating to Dr. Lecter, she's aware of the effect of her words and what she's doing, and she's hiding a part of herself from him, but there's also the layer of her story that Clarice doesn't understand.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Watch Jodie's performance in *Nell*. Pay attention to the way she uses gesture and vocal choices to portray her character. Remember that she created this character from scratch, without any real research available to her. Though she did research how a person with a stroke would speak.

Think about the three layers of acting that Jodie talks about. After you're done watching, take a moment and journal about some moments that stood out for you in Jodie's performance. Then reflect on the following:

- What was *Nell* communicating/showing?
- What was she hiding (Jodie points out that this is less of a layer here)?
- What part of *Nell* is unconscious to her?
- Where did you feel the most emotional, and why do you think you felt that way?

Things to keep in mind when working with actors on set:

- **Be direct.** If you want an actor to do something differently, tell them. Don't be precious and try to sugar coat anything, it's better to be blunt and honest about what you want, in a kind way of course.
- **Be prepared and flexible**. Have a succinct plan A for how you want each scene to go, and also be able to be spontaneous with different takes within that preparation.
- **Don't use result-oriented direction.** For example, telling an actor you'd like them to cry at the end of a scene or saying things like "I want the audience to feel ____." This may block the actor from being able to emote and perform in an organic way if they are only thinking about a result.
- **Include actors in your process**. If your actors are open to it, ask them if they'd like to look at your shot list, lookbook, storyboard, or whatever else you've done in prep in order for them to be able to best serve your vision.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Research interviews with directors talking about their specific process working with actors and actors talking about their process.

MEDIA LIST

- *An Actor Prepares* by Constantin Stanislavski, Routledge, 1936. This book is a standard known by most trained actors. Stanislavski presents his knowledge about the craft of acting using a semi-fiction form, appearing under the name Tortsov. Using this character, Stanislavski doesn't claim an invention of any technique, but instead offers an overview of the craft and the discipline it takes to master. For directors, it's also a good first look into speaking an actor's language in terms of understanding and utilizing concepts like "objectives" and "actions" in addition to other acting vocabulary.
- *Off Camera with Sam Jones*. This TV show offers many interviews. It's also available as a podcast: https://offcamera.com/

Directing Actors

Directing Actors

> You can't make a film in your hotel room all by yourself. It requires you to collaborate. And that also means that an actor's process has to come into your process.

If you're a new filmmaker, one of your biggest questions might be: How do I direct actors? And: What do I do if an actor won't be directed? It's crucial for you to learn how to meld your process with your actors' processes, since as a director you'll need to be flexible with any pre-conceived ideas that you might have.

Think of directing as parenting.

- Allow space for your actors to take risks and fail, or to take risks and succeed.
- Reassure your actors that you are there for them every step of the way so that they feel safe and supported.
- Give your actors freedom while also giving them structure. For example, be clear about what your goals are for each take or each scene so the actor knows what to expect.

Directing children and animals is directing at its purest.

- Both children and animals are entirely honest when it comes to working in film. They will only do things that feel authentic and organic to them.

- They know their limit and they will communicate that to you.

- You might have to loosen a child up and play games with them in order for them to open up to you on set , especially if they're feeling shy.

- Leave preconceived ideas out, because if an idea doesn't feel natural to them you will see it. Recall Jodie's experience directing Adam Hann-Byrd in *Little Man Tate* and asking him to put his hands in his pockets. This was an idea that she couldn't quite let go of, but it was clear to her as she was filming that it wasn't working.

- If you have actors cast as mother and child, or another type of strong relationship, suggest that they do some simple hand touching exercises as Jodie uses to establish a connection and trust.

Give your actors space to work.

- The director can communicate their ideas in prep, before a scene starts, and give notes afterwards. But when the camera is rolling, the actor is in control, and it's best to let them do a complete take.

- Give specific and positive notes to your actors, try not to bombard them with multiple notes at once.

- Be aware of their needs so that they can give the best performance possible. Sometimes you need to lighten the mood a bit, or the actor needs to step away from the character momentarily.

- Take breaks when necessary, but try not to take too much time between takes as you don't want to lose your momentum.

- Know how to give notes, and keep it positive by saying things like "let's try something different."

- Keep your communication short and specific.

Know who you are working with.

- If you've never worked with an actor before, research them on your own. You can also call other directors they've worked with and ask about their process and how they like to work. Some things to ask:

  - Are they good about knowing their lines?
  - Do they generally show up on time?
  - Do they prefer to do their coverage first?

- Does the actor come from a theatre or film background? If they come from a theatre background, they might want to know less about the details of the shots you have planned and be more concerned with the actual acting that's happening in each take. If they are used to working more on film, give them all the information you have available about your shot list, camera placement, and lenses.

- Know your actors' skill levels. When Jodie directed Anne Bancroft and Robert Downey Jr. in *Home for the Holidays*, she knew that Robert Downey Jr. is a very strong improviser and Anne Bancroft prefers to have everything locked in prior to shooting. By knowing and utilizing their strengths, Jodie was able to get the most out of their performances.

Be thoughtful about multiple takes and rewrites.

- When you are doing many takes of the same scene, make sure you have a reason. The actor needs to know what to do differently in each take. You also don't want to burn them out for no reason. Communicate as much as possible.

- Listen to your actors' instincts. If a part of the writing isn't making sense and the actor is having trouble getting it, consider a rewrite. The collaboration is ongoing from prep to wrap. Continue to collaborate with your actors throughout the process

Create a calm and respectful environment.

- Try not to yell or raise your voice on set, it creates unnecessary tension that isn't conducive to creativity.

- Don't make your actors wait. If they are called at a certain time, do everything in your power to get them to set at that time. If you are unable to do so, check in with that actor as soon as possible so that they know what's going on.

READING LIST

- *Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film & Television* by Judith Weston, Michael Wiese Productions, 1999. In this well-regarded book, Weston gives simple, effective tools for directing—whether you're brand new to it or you want to learn a few new things. She writes about understanding human behavior and applying that knowledge to scripts and rehearsal situations.

- *Making Movies* by Sidney Lumet, Random House, 1995. Part filmmaking guide and part memoir, this book illustrates Lumet's collaborative attitude, which extended to everyone on set—from AD to gaffer to DP.

Shooting Your Film

Shooting Your Film

> Very often, the constraints that come up—whether it's the sun going down or the crew has to break for lunch or your actor broke their knee—allow you to open up to improvise and to come up with something that is clearer and much more the point of your vision than you ever anticipated.

Make the most of your time.

- Don't do multiple takes of your establishing wide shot. Know that you will be able to get the lines nailed down in the other shots you have planned; the first couple takes of the wide do not have to be perfect.
- The adage "get coverage, get everything" is not true when you're working on film with a smaller budget.
- Be ready to improvise with your shot list if need be. For *Little Man Tate*, Jodie had at least five shots prepped for the birthday party scene. Unfortunately, the sun was already starting to set, so they didn't have time for multiple shots. She made the decision to stay in a wide shot instead. The constraint of losing sunlight allowed for a richer moment than what she had originally planned.
- Have a basic idea in your head of how you might want to edit the shots together.

> A script supervisor is there to talk through story—to talk through the editing and how the shots that we're achieving in production will end up being cut into the final film.

Track performances with set notes.

- Jodie uses her script line-by-line to make notes as to which take she prefers. She simply numbers each of the takes and puts an asterisk next to the one she likes.
- When there are multiple cameras as well as a lot of dialogue at play, Jodie notates which camera angle her preferred take is on. If there's a line that she felt she didn't get, she has her notes to help remind her that she wants to pick it up and redo it later.
- Jodie prefers to get full coverage of both/all characters saying their lines, even though she knows she won't be on their face the entire time during the edit.

The script supervisor is basically the archivist on a film. They monitor memory card changes, camera movement, if the actors change a word or a line, and any other continuity issues.

Selecting a Performance Case Study: Jack O’Connell in *Money Monster*

Selecting a Performance Case Study: Jack O'Connell in *Money Monster*

> Sometimes, you have to do a lot of takes. And as an actor, that can be a painful process because you have to be able to find spontaneity, you have to make it feel real, you have to discover it in that moment as if it was just happening to you.

As a director, you may need to ask an actor to do multiple takes; as an actor, knowing how to do this is a necessary skill. The primary way to practice this is with on-camera experience. If you are more of a novice actor, no need to be intimidated by being asked to do multiple takes—a good director will be able to help guide you. However, it's important to ask questions if you need clarification or take breaks when you need them.

In *Money Monster*, Jack O'Connell's character is trying to get someone to acknowledge his pain for the duration of the film. He essentially wants someone to tell him that he matters, and in this scene he finally gets that acknowledgment. This is a huge moment and turning point for the character, so Jodie wanted to ensure she got the exact performance she needed in doing these many takes shown here.

On top of a delivering an emotional and honest performance, Jack had to keep many technical elements in mind simultaneously while each of these takes was being shot:

- His hand had to always be in frame while he was holding the detonator.
- While holding up his hand, he needed to make sure his hand never blocks his face.
- When he turns to his left he needs to be mindful of not blocking the actor behind him from the camera.
- He has to remain in focus, which means he has to maintain a certain level of stillness.

> The wonderful thing about Jack O'Connell is that he loves a kind of primitive language. He sometimes speaks a different vocabulary than I do. And so both of us have to translate.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Even though his lines stay the same, and he's literally saying the same thing, there's something different about each take. Try to develop your eye for how the takes are different.

Go through and rewatch different takes that are shown, and make notes about each one. In your notebook, write down what, in your opinion is different about each take. Can be technical, emotional, or both.

Knowing how to talk to your actors and how they work best is essential. All actors are different, they have different languages. For example, Jack O'Connell is an actor who just wants to be spoken to about character—what his character wants and what his character is feeling. Jack works well when he can build momentum towards emotion, so Jodie knows she has to get him through a lot of takes before he reaches his peak emotionally.

Editing

Editing

> Each choice that you make is meaningful. And it's a long process of figuring out how each decision that you make might change the impact on the audience or the feeling for the story.

Editing is a new part of the collaborative filmmaking process, because now you have existing footage. First, the editor will present an assembly; then the director will watch and make a plethora of notes. The first viewing can feel vulnerable and discouraging, and generally doesn't feel good. Keep in mind that this is just part of the process. In fact, the editing process is very similar to the rewriting process. As you edit, you'll break down the footage and keep chipping away at individual scenes. You will be finding ways to make your film more meaningful via addition and subtraction.

Try to develop a keen eye for details, even though it's much easier to cut digitally than it was to cut film. Take notes about why you like each take—what makes one take better than another—and trust your instincts. This is the dialogue you will be having with your editor so that you can best express your ideas. For example:

- Is that line reading better?
- Is the performance better for the story you're trying to tell? If yes, why?

- Why does the character wait so long to exit or to enter?

- Ask yourself questions about each take as if you were the character.

In addition to developing a strong emotional memory of why a take worked, it's also important to develop a strong technical memory of what the actors are doing physically.

> "Emily Meade brought this performance to the table and once we saw the truth of it, it all happened all at once, all direct to camera—there was something so raw and so true about it. It's wonderful how she was able to build the performance from not knowing what she's gonna say to him to starting to insult him.

This scene in *Money Monster* is a key moment where both men are made to feel like failures—Kyle in the face of his wife, and George Clooney in the face of his producers and the rest of the world that's watching the broadcast. In order to build to this moment, Jodie used a series of back and forth editing to build tension and to highlight the level of public humiliation that both characters are feeling:

1. Intimate moment between Kyle and his wife

2. Reaction shot of George Clooney's character

3. Wide shot of the production team on the show

4. Shot of Kyle and his wife until camera cuts out

5. Shot of Kyle only reacting to his wife, sound only

6. Different shots of the rest of the world watching

7. End on Kyle

You will develop a different editing style depending on the story you want to tell. In *Money Monster,* the editing style is quick—until we land on scenes between two people, and then it becomes very theatrical.

> I think it's always helpful to start with the characters.

When you make a decision on how you want to cut a scene, it's helpful to start by thinking about the characters in the film.

- From which character's point of view is the scene taking place?
- Who are they?
- Who are they in this moment?
- How are they feeling?
- How do I want to feel through them?

Best case scenario, when you finish your editing process you feel like you made the film you set out to make, and that you didn't have to sacrifice anything, and that all the editing and cutting you did made the film better. However, this certainly isn't always the case. Finishing the edit can be painful and you may feel like you've sacrificed things you didn't want to. Know that this is all part of filmmaking.

> In the cutting room, there is a lot of adventure in figuring out when to hold them and when to fold them. What you hold onto in terms of the vision of your film, in terms of the edit and what you acquiesce to.

Consider hosting your first screening of a film with some friends in the business that you trust. Invite anyone you know who can give you honest feedback. Notes about pacing or anything that's unclear are especially helpful. Listen carefully to your writer and your editor friends. They will be the most helpful in telling you where your problems are, how to fix them, and maybe even turn them into strengths.

READING LIST

In The Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing by Walter Murch, Silman-James Press, 2001. This is often considered an essential guide to film editing. In this book, Murch encourages editors to prioritize emotion over technicalities of editing.

Music

Music

> The crazy thing about applying music to your movie is that you just never know what is the right music until you finally see your film. You can pretend to know. You can say you're going to know. You can have lists. You can organize it. You can prepare. But you just never really know until the film is in your hands.

There's no single way to use music in film. Some of the ways in which Jodie uses it include:

- **Music can express character**—whether a literal expression of the character or a more subtle, inward expression of their emotion.
- **Music can "erase the seams" of your film**—smooth the edges and make it feel more organic. It shouldn't steal the show.

Consider the aspect of your story that you want music to highlight. Jodie chose jazz music for *Little Man Tate* to reflect the character's journey towards finding acceptance—to form his own band, so to speak. In *The Beaver*, Jodie uses the tango to reflect the repetitive nature of the main character's worries.

> For a person like Fred Tate, who doesn't have a family, who feels alone in solitary—this movie is about bringing together a jazz band for him. He finally belongs to a group of odd balls. So the jazz music in the film evolves from the beginning to the end.

FILM STUDIES EXERCISE:
Watch *Little Man Tate* and listen to the score. Reflect on the following in your notebook:

- Pay attention to each character's introduction in the film and what you hear.
- Notice the evolution of the music that Jodie speaks about throughout the film.
  - When does it shift?
  - Why does it shift?

To take it even further, watch the two French films: *Murmur of the Heart* (1971) and *The 400 Blows* (1959)—both of which influenced Jodie's use of music—and apply to the same queries listed above.

READING LIST
The Complete Guide to Film Scoring by Richard Davis, Berklee Press, 2010. This book outlines the entire process step-by-step, and is a great overall primer for anyone wanting to learn more about how music is utilized in film.