

Psycho- Notes

Opening Credits

- Unsettling and disturbing atmosphere created by the music and the black and white lines that appear on the screen.
- Music is intense from the beginning. It's fast paced, unnerving and violent and therefore immediately puts us on edge.
- Opening credits suggest that the world we're about to enter is out of sync and chaotic.
- Hitchcock chose could have made the film in colour but deliberately chose black and white because it reflects the complexities of the two main characters. Marion and Norman both have good and bad sides to their characters.
- Everything is disjointed and in disarray.
- The movement of white and black lines is like a fight and represents the constant battle between good and evil – a violent struggle where one must prevail over the other.
- Symbolically illustrates one of the film's major themes – the conflict between good and evil.

Opening Sequence- Hotel Room Sequence

- Long drawn out establishing shot that moves towards the window of the room that Marion and Sam are in. The camera seems to be looking through the window suggesting illicit activity is taking place and we as an audience are spying on the characters within. This highlights the secrecy of their relationship.
- Low key lighting inside creates a sad atmosphere which highlights the bleakness of Marion's current situation and creates feelings of sympathy for her.
- Character- Marion is a good person and this is revealed through dialogue with Sam in which she states that she wants to have an open, honest and respectable relationship with Sam.
- Clothes- are white to symbolise Marion's good nature and purity in this part of the film, before she is corrupted by money and desperation.
- Dialogue- "I hate having to be with you in a place like this." Shows that she is a good person and wants to be respectable.
- Dialogue reveals that she wants to be happy but can't and this is the motivation behind Marion stealing the money. Their unhappiness is due to money and this makes us feel sorry for Marion and understand her motivations for her subsequent actions.

The Temptation Sequence

- Props- painting in background of barren wasteland symbolizes Marion's situation- barren, empty, bleak, lost and fruitless.
- Dialogue- Marion's conversation with the customer encourages Marion to equate money with happiness. This is important in influencing Marion's future decision.
- High-low angle shots of Marion and the customer make us feel sorry for Marion. It seems like he's taunting her with tales of how rich he is and how he makes his daughters happy with money. We already know Marion's predicament and so sympathy is increased.
- Shot with paintings in the background. Marion moves from bleak and unhappy painting to a painting that seems to symbolize peace, calm, happiness and stability. The painting symbolizes what money brings and what Marion hopes to achieve.
- Costume- shift to Marion's home where she is now dressed in black. Her costume now illustrates her change of character/mood.
- Close-up of money confirms that she hasn't handed the money into the bank and we now see a different/bad side to Marion.
- Music (non-diegetic sound)- music kicks in as camera moves towards the money and then focuses on a suitcase which suggests Marion is going to take the money and run. The music is sombre and slow which indicates she's doing something bad.
- Marion is shot with a number of photographs/pictures of children behind her. This is symbolic given that children have connotations of innocence and purity and these are positioned literally behind her. It would seem that these qualities are a thing of the past for her.
- Close-up of Marion- in the background there is a shower. This is an example of foreshadowing. The shot foreshadows the fate that will eventually befall her.
- Props- the mirror illustrates two things: the good and the bad side to Marion's personality; the decision making process and the fact that Marion is literally in two minds about whether to take the money. The mirror also brings to mind ideas of guilt- Marion has trouble looking at her reflection, almost as if she can't bear to confront herself.
- Costume- had white bag previously, now it's black.
- The money is the last thing Marion puts in her bag which indicates that it was a difficult decision as highlighted by the mirror.

Parlour Sequence

- Equal number of shots of Marion and Norman. Norman is presented in a subtle low angle shot that suggests he is the one who is comfortable and in control. He's in his natural environment. The subtle high angle shot of Marion makes her look more vulnerable.
- Marion is bathed in soft light to show she's essentially good and there is nothing sinister about her. The objects that surround her are rounded in shape and are every day home comforts. This suggests she is a character we can view positively. This contrasts with Norman.

- Norman is sitting in the shadows which suggests there is something sinister about him. He is surrounded by images of death and unusual, jagged, macabre objects which implies a mind in chaos and makes the viewer feel uneasy.
- Norman has a shadow, Marion doesn't. This links to the idea that just as his mother is a constant presence in the back of Norman's mind, so is the shadow. A shadow has connotations of being sinister, evil and malevolent to illustrate the characteristics that Mother has. Shadows are a motif in the film (recurring symbol).
- Close-up of bird of prey (another motif) immediately creates a sinister/evil impression of the room. When Norman tells Marion, "You eat like a bird", the implication is that she will suffer the same fate as the dead ones surrounding her. This immediately puts us on edge as Marion is a character with whom we have an emotional investment and we don't want her to come to any harm.
- Close-up of the Raven which is a symbol of death and therefore makes us feel uneasy and worried for Marion. The shadows around the bird make it seem bigger and more imposing.
- Low angle shot of Norman with bird of prey in the background is a complex image. It gives the idea that one character is going to be preying on another and makes us worry for Marion's safety. It's a complex image because it also suggests what is happening to Norman: he's being preyed upon by Mother. On one hand we get the impression of the bird preying on Norman. On the other hand it looks like the wings belong to Norman. It brings to mind ideas of the Angel of Death/ that he himself is a bird of prey.
- Dialogue reveals Norman is lonely. He has an unusual hobby which suggests he has time to fill. As a result we feel sorry for Norman.
- The high and low angle shots have become more dramatic/distinct to suggest Marion's increasing vulnerability and Norman's increasing power.
- Low angle shot of Norman from the side with the bird of prey in the background suggests that the bird is swooping down upon him and Mother is about to attack. The reoccurrence of this shot suggests the extent to which Mother is preying on Norman.
- The turning point of the sequence occurs when Marion suggests his mother be "put somewhere". Mother rears herself in an act of self-preservation.
- Following this Norman moves closer to the camera. His personality changes completely and the music starts to further emphasise the increased sinister atmosphere.
- Close-up of Norman's face half in shadow and half in light to illustrate the split in personality and the conflict between good and evil. More shadow than light is significant as it suggests that there is more of Mother than there is of Norman at this point.
- When Norman moves back into the light he seems to have returned to being Norman.
- The phallic symbol of the candles symbolises Norman's lust, desire and attraction to Marion. He is seated between the two candlesticks which suggests the strength of his desires and the fact he can't get away from these feelings. It is this desire that brings out the jealous Mother side that ultimately leads to Marion's death.
- Dialogue: "Sometimes just one time can be enough". This makes us feel sorry for Marion because she's going to try to repent and put right her wrong.

- The close-up of Marion with the Raven that looks like it is pecking at her clearly implies her impending death.
- Marion gives her real name before she leaves the parlour. This tells us that she trusts Norman. However, the close-up of the register confirms that she's a liar and a cheat and provides the Mother side of Norman with more motive for her death.
- Following this as Norman moves back into the parlour his face is submerged in shadow to suggest Mother is beginning to take over.
- Low angle shot of Norman standing between the two birds. The bird of prey in the background looks even more dramatic and vicious due to low angle. It looks as if it is swooping down on Norman. The bird in the foreground looks as if it's pecking Norman. This shot suggests that Norman is both abused and dominated by Mother and the birds and their position in relation to Norman reflect this.
- Marion takes off her black clothes which is symbolic of her removing the sin and trying to do the right thing.
- Norman doesn't look through the peep hole for very long. This indicates that although it's Norman who starts to look through the hole, the jealous Mother side emerges again and takes over.
- When Norman pulls back from the peep hole, his face is completely covered in shadow. He doesn't look guilty, panicked or embarrassed. Instead he looks purposeful as he heads to the house to get the knife he will kill Marion with.

The Shower Sequence.

- Marion flushes the paper down the toilet which symbolically represents her flushing away the errors of the past.
- Bathroom is a private place where you're meant to feel safe. Hitchcock plays with this and totally subverts our expectations.
- Marion is now naked and therefore more vulnerable.
- The walls are white and clinical looking which serves to emphasise Marion's new found purity.
- The shower is symbolic of Marion washing away her sins.
- Dark shadow in the background increases tension because we can't tell who it is or what is going to happen but we do know that person is not meant to be there. We can see but she can't.
- The black shadow that surrounds Mother has clear connotations of evil and death and something evil and malevolent. Shadow is a motif in the film and is symbolic of Mother and her evil force.
- The sound unsettles us in this sequence. The non-diegetic sound of the high pitched violin works in time with the slashing and stabbing movements. Marion's screaming, the highly disturbing sound of the knife penetrating her flesh and the diegetic sound of the shower all help to create a chaotic and violent scene. This is also achieved through the quick editing, a quick succession of shots one after the other, in which the camera focuses on a number of shots of Marion from a number of different angles. This heightens the ferocity of the attack and encourages feelings of disarray and confusion.

- Close-up of Marion's hand emphasises the idea that life is slipping away from Marion. She is desperately trying to cling onto life.
- Music also reflects that her life is slipping away as it gets deeper, slower and more sombre.
- Marion reaches out to grab onto life. This confirms that she is all alone and helpless. All she has to hold onto is a shower curtain.
- Close-up of plug which is symbolic of Marion's death as her life runs down it.
- As an audience we feel very alienated and unnerved because the main character is dead. The lack of music and movement emphasises this.
- The undignified way Marion is lying is shocking and we feel sorry for her.
- Following the close-up of the money, the focus shifts to Norman and his Mother. This is what the film is really about.
- The money is known as a MacGuffin: an object used to move the narrative forward but isn't actually the focus of the film. However, we need the money to get to the story of Norman and his Mother.
- Knocking off of photo of the bird symbolises the end of Marion's life and implies that Norman had something to do with it.