

# Teaching Film Language with the New Set Films

The new set films for 2013-2014 are:

- *Jaws* (Director: Steven Spielberg, 1975)
- *A Matter of Loaf and Death* (Director: Nick Park, 2008)

## Teaching Film Language with *A Matter of Loaf and Death*

### Analysis of Film Language in the Opening Scene

(0'00 to 0'15) – Note in this sequence how Park uses sinister foreboding music to generate tension and build suspense. There is also an interesting interplay between the diegetic music in the scene; the song the baker himself is singing, and the suspenseful non-diegetic music we can also hear.

(0'15") – Park uses camera movement to change our perspective, the camera panning and then tracking as the unseen attacker picks up the rolling pin and advances towards the baker. This tracking shot also functions as a 'Point of View' or POV shot, the camera offering us a subjective view of what the assailant sees. (Similar uses of POV can be found throughout horror and suspense cinema to build suspense. *Jaws*, for example, frequently deploys POV shots rather than actually show us the shark.)

(0'28) – As the attacker advances, there is a change in the lighting conditions. Low key lighting is used. 'Low Key' is a lighting style in which the main source of illumination or "key" light has been placed at a low angle, its beams directed upwards. Note how the sinister shadow of the attacker falls across the victim's face.

(0'38) – A quick Fade to Black takes us from the scene of the crime to Wallace & Gromit's kitchen. The use of this fade implies that some time has passed. It also allows us to view this new scene as a distinct sequence that is not immediately connected to the events which we have just seen. Had Park cut directly from the Baker's head landing in the dough to Gromit reading the newspaper, we might have assumed that both events were happening in the same location.

(0'42 to 46) – A zoom out allows the camera to alter what we see, taking us back from the Newspaper headlines to reveal Gromit in the kitchen. Gromit is in a medium shot (MS), his head and most of his torso are visible. Note too how Park has used shallow focus. Gromit, the main subject of the shot, is sharply focused but his background is not. This selective use of focus allows us to immediately discern Gromit's importance. The backdrop is still clear enough for us to recognise it, but its softness allows Gromit to stand out from it. The lighting here is 'High Key' – most of the illumination coming from a bright overhead source. There is nothing stark or threatening about this lighting style.

(0'49) Gromit, still in MS, looks up towards the ceiling and Park immediately cuts to (0'50) an alarm clock on the shelf. The positioning and framing of the alarm clock in

close up and the fact that Park immediately cuts from Gromit's eyes moving to this object, establishes a connection between the two shots. By viewing these two shots and how they're cut together, we immediately understand that Gromit is reacting to this noise.

(0'51) – A wider shot shows us Wallace lying asleep in the foreground. The clock, slightly defocused but still clearly visible, is behind him. The framing here allows us to see both the clock and Wallace. The use of the alarm clock sound effect, the mise-en-scene and framing make the meaning of the shot very clear. Wallace is in a deep sleep.

(0'53) – Here Gromit, in MS once more, hits a red button. Note how the use of a sound effect signals that an action has taken place.

(0'54) – Here the camera shows us the alarm clock in MS before tracking backwards, as a comical looking mechanical speaker system rises through the floor boards. The framing of the shot adds to the hilarity of it. The notion of Wallace being undisturbed by the simple alarm clock was understandable. Here, however, seeing Wallace in the foreground with the special alarm droning in the background, has a comic effect. Just as we are wondering how he could possibly sleep through such a din, Park cuts to another angle of Wallace's bedroom.

(1'00) – Here we see a Long Shot of the room. Wallace's bed is in fact in the middle of a mill and noisy cogs and milling wheels surround him on all sides. The sudden cut from the last shot in which we assumed Wallace had only two alarms to contend with, to this, the reveal that he's in the heart of an extremely noisy industrial location, magnifies the comic effect. The wide reveal shows us more of the mise-en-scene. The information revealed in the earlier shot suggested that Wallace was asleep in a conventional bedroom. Here the presence of industrial machinery and wider cavernous space totally changes the meaning of the scene.

(1'07) – In a close up shot we see Gromit filling a balloon full of water. Note how the use of sound effects for the slightly stiff tap and the balloon add a sense of realism and texture to the moment. The mise-en-scene throughout this film is detailed and worth dissecting and even small details are worth discussing. Here the balloon is bright red, a deliberate choice of colour to make it stand out from the background.

(1'25) – Here a low angle shot shows us the balloon falling. The angle emphasises the height from which it is plummeting and shows us more of the location, a normal house converted into a windmill and bakery.

(1'59) – Here we have a striking shot of a chute. The canted or "Dutch" angle emphasises its height and turns the chute into a wavy diagonal line which crosses the screen. The choice of angle adds to the sense of motion as Wallace slides down the chute.

(2'05) – By this point in the sequence the music has adopted an upbeat and heroic sounding tone. This heroic music adds to the sense of comedy and comic exaggeration. Wallace and Gromit may be mere bakers but they have an orchestral score which suggests heroism and action.

(2'07) – Here, in a dynamic tracking shot, the camera keeps pace with Wallace as he slides down the chute.

(2'08) – Here we have an exciting POV shot. Whereas the first POV of the movie was designed to generate suspense and mystery, the purpose of this one is to place us in the shoes of a character we already know. By seeing what Wallace sees as he plummets down the chute, we can empathise with his exciting morning routine.

(2'09) – Here the camera pans, which means that it is moved on its axis to reframe the action. The panning motion allows us to follow Wallace as Gromit alters the angle of the chute.

(2'24) – In this shot Wallace's hand and tea-mug are in the extreme foreground and are sharply focused. Gromit in the background is in soft focus. The framing of the shot and use of selective focus convey the importance of the tea mug.

(2'44) – In this shot we see a close up of Gromit's paw reaching for the in-car toaster. The design of the toaster is witty and imaginative, appearing to be a retro-fitted car cassette player. The placing of the letters M U T T on the buttons is typical of the level of detail in all the design work in Park's work. Studying and reviewing shots like this always reveals aspects of the mise-en-scene which might not have been apparent upon the first viewing.

(2,56) – Here is a “Two Shot” a medium shot, composed so that both characters are present in the frame.

### **Camera Framing**

Director Nick Park uses all of the standard shot sizes familiar from the Classical Hollywood Style to frame the characters, create meaning and generate emotion.

(3'26) In the scene where Wallace and Gromit deliver their morning round of fresh loaves to various business and houses there are number of striking compositions. This one is a particularly good example. The low camera angle makes the mail box seem large, the canted angle altering its positioning in the frame further. This shot looks exciting and dynamic even before the flying loaf enters frame. Note too how the mail box is photographed in crisp focus but the background is kept soft. This emphasises the importance of the foreground object.

(3'40) The slow zoom in towards Wallace's face reinforces the idea that he has suddenly fallen in love with the female cyclist he sees.

(6'54) Shifting the focus mid-shot or “Pulling Focus” is a powerful visual tool for communicating distance or disconnection. Notice here how the camera pulls focus from Wallace in the foreground answering the front door to Gromit, framed in the kitchen door in the background.

(10'44) The high angle looking down on Gromit as he enters the house makes him seem smaller and more vulnerable. This naturally increases our sense of anxiety.

## Camera Movement

(4'53) – The camera tracks alongside the van and the bicycle as they speed down the hill. The motion of the camera emphasises the overall sense of motion and danger. The generous framing allows us to see both vehicles and the street they're speeding through.

(4'59) – Here there's another exciting POV shot as the camera tracks forward. What makes this one seem especially exciting is the use of a wide angle lens. Notice how curved the approaching wall looks. The distortion provided by the lens increases the sense of speed and jeopardy.

(10'29) – Here the camera tracks forward and tilts upwards, making the house in shot seem even more sinister.

## Editing

The pattern of continuity editing in *A Matter of Loaf and Death* propels the story forward seamlessly. The pace of editing is slow and unobtrusive, the tempo increasing only when the director wishes to heighten the dramatic tension and suspense. Two sequences have particularly effective editing.

### 1. The Mansion (10'30 to 13'00)

As Gromit explores Piella's mansion, editing is used brilliantly to both reveal Piella's sinister secrets and to generate suspense. The tension mounts as Gromit turns the pages of the book, the pace increasing and shots growing shorter as he gets closer to the horrifying truth. The cutting back and forth between the panicked Gromit upstairs and Piella downstairs, as she enters the hallway and then mounts the stairs, generates considerable tension.

### 2. The Confrontation (23'51 to 27'14)

Here, as Fluffles confronts the evil and unhinged Piella, Park uses editing to amplify the tension and comic suspense. As Piella swipes at Fluffles we cut back and forth between the pair, each move by one character is countered by the other and the editing tempo generates maximum excitement from this fight. Park also uses intercutting, taking us back and forth from Piella and Fluffles inside the windmill to Wallace hanging precariously from the arm of the windmill outside.

## Lighting

High-key lighting is used in many of the interior scenes at the beginning of the film. Park uses warm three-point lighting to show the bright, colourful world that Wallace and Gromit inhabit. This idealised vision of their day to day life stands in stark contrast to the dark forces which will soon threaten them.

Low-key lighting is also used throughout the film, often in combination with camera movement and a dramatic musical score to evoke a sense of threat and danger. When Gromit investigates the mansion later on, the dark low key lighting emphasises the sense of danger and peril. The shot at 10'47, for example, allows us to see Gromit clearly but casts his face and upper body in shadow. This enveloping darkness seems to represent the dire peril which will soon threaten him.

At 23'57 we see some particularly vivid use of backlighting. Here Fluffles and the Forklift that she is operating are lit from behind, with shafts of light serving to illustrate the sudden strength and resilience of the tiny poodle.

## Sound

Diegetic sounds in the film include the motorised sound of the windmill, the thunder and rain as Gromit investigate's Piella's mansion, the heavy footsteps as Piella mounts the stairs, the sounds of the forklift during the final confrontation.

The musical soundtrack is one of the most important ways in which Nick Park conveys story and character information. In the opening title sequence we hear sinister and suspenseful music, this establishes a sense of danger. As Wallace and Gromit embark upon their rounds we can hear their theme tune; an upbeat brass band march. This tune is particularly important, partly because we come to associate this particular motif with our heroes. The musical style of this theme is even more important. This type of brass band music is very closely associated with the film's setting, the North of England.

## Mise-en-Scène

(5'46) – it is easy to overlook the role of performance in mise-en-scène. In this shot the sense that Wallace is star-struck and giddy by this encounter with Piella is reinforced by his body language.

Gromit and Fluffles, being mute, are even more dependent upon body language and Park and his team of animators use elements of the mise-en-scène to convey their individual personalities and character traits. Character is conveyed through physical gesture, facial expression, body language and by the deeply expressive faces, eyes and ears. At the end of the climactic battle between Piella and our heroes, for example, (27'00) there is no way to doubt Fluffles' sadness. Her motions and facial expressions convey a sense of loss and regret.

We also learn much about each character in *A Matter of Loaf and Death* by their actions and interests. Wallace is the inventor of a number of mechanical gadgets to make household chores, such as making breakfast, easier. We can tell that Gromit is a highly intelligent and curious dog by the fact that he reads newspapers and is capable of operating complex machinery. The décor of Piella's house and the entries in her journal help convey her unhinged mind. Her home is stark and gothic but with bright flashes of pink. This presence of a deeply feminine colour in such a dark and sinister abode reminds us that she was once an innocent and sane young lady.

The patterned wallpaper and quaint, old-fashioned furniture in the home of Wallace and Gromit and bright, colourful objects such as the garden gnome seen outside, convey a sense of the warm, cosy, domestic existence that the pair share prior to the arrival of Piella.

# Teaching Film Language with *Jaws*

## Analysis of Film Language in the Second Shark Attack

(12'47) - The camera pans, first to the left as it follows a bather and a dog entering the water and then to the right as it follows a young boy. The boy's red trunks are an interesting choice of mise-en-scene. The bright colour marks the boy out as someone of interest within the frame. The color also foreshadows his grisly fate. The camera stops panning, framing the boy on the left and his mother on the right, keeping them both in the foreground as they talk. The mother agrees that the boy can spend go back in the water for ten more minutes.

(13'13) Continuing the unbroken shot, the camera tilts up, tracking backwards and following the boy, then allowing him to exit frame and coming to rest in a new position which shows us Chief Brody in close-up side profile (13'22).

The framing throughout *Jaws* is inventive and expressive. Spielberg, by using an Anamorphic aspect ratio which measures 1:2.35, has a frame which is much wider than the normal 16:9 frame used for most modern films. This allows him to create striking compositions and effects. In this shot of Brody (13'22) we can see his wife behind him, in the left of the frame. We also get a very clear sense of place, the wide frame helps facilitate this. The shot is focused so that Brody, who is in the foreground, is sharper than the people behind him.

(13'35) – Here the frame size and Spielberg's choice of angle make the shot of the dog running into the water dynamic and interesting. Note how we can see the line of the horizon and how the water seems to lap at the foreground, almost threatening to pour over the edge of the frame. It is a simple shot but one which immerses us in this world.

(13'39) – In this brief shot we see the boy's Mother looking out to sea. Note that she is positioned to the right of frame and looking to the left. This mirrors the directional continuity already established with the side-profile shot of Brody.

(13'41) – In this shot we see the boy jump into the water. He travels from right to left across the frame as he moves further from the shore. This motion across the frame re-affirms the directional continuity already established.

(13'41 to 14'00) – The use of sound in this twenty-second part of the sequence is interesting. The naturalistic sound of bathers in the water, the splashing and playful cries. These noises all add to the sense of place and an atmosphere of calm.

(14'08) – This mid-shot shows Brody watching the bathers; he is calm and relaxed. There's nothing in his body language which denotes immediate concern. Someone crosses the frame in the extreme foreground filling the complete screen for a brief moment. We then cut to a tighter shot of the figure in the foreground as they exit frame to reveal a tighter shot of Brody. This use of people in the extreme foreground as natural wipes allows Spielberg to link two different shots invisibly. It is an unnerving technique which helps to build tension.

Another figure crosses the extreme foreground, blocking our vision for a few frames and allowing Spielberg to cut to a tight close up of Brody (14'10). These disruptions to our

view of Brody are unnerving and annoying, forcing us to empathise with Brody, who would prefer an unobscured view.

We see a POV shot (14'14) of Brody looking out to sea before another figure crosses frame in the extreme foreground. Again a disguise cut is used to take us into another shot. As the figure leaves frame (14'17) we see a cut has taken place and Brody is revealed in medium shot once more. Another disguise cut takes us to another POV shot (14'19). The repeated use of this technique in conjunction with the POV shots creates a sense that we, like Brody, are trying to watch the sea but that our field of vision is constantly being blocked.

The shot seen at (14'42) adds to the sense of Brody's vision being blocked. As a townspeople talks to the Chief about some trivial matter, their bare shoulder is in the extreme foreground, blocking most of the frame, Brody's eyes are just visible as he tries to peek around the townspeople.

The POV shot at (14'45) lets us see what Brody is seeing, the townspeople is in the extreme foreground on the right of frame. In the left of the frame someone is swimming close to shore. This shot is unusual in that both the man in the foreground and the swimmer in the distance are in sharp focus. This deep focus effect has been achieved by using a special Dioptic lens. A Dioptic lens is a split lens with two focal planes which can be used to focus on both a background and foreground image at the same time. There is some blurring in the middle of the image, an inevitable visual flaw which comes with the use of such lenses. The effect is disorienting for the audience.

The anxiety created by this last shot and the one which precedes it help set up the false scare ahead. Brody's fear that the female swimmer is screaming because she is being attacked by a shark is initially shared by the audience.

There is a very effective shot at 15'15 of children jumping into the water. The angle and position of the camera, seemingly just above the surface of the water add to a sense of immersion. Notice too how, with the tension and anxiety already high, every loud splash seems to increase our sense of fear.

At 15'26 we see more fantastic use of framing. The shot here allows us to see swimmers in the distance in the left hand side of the frame, the old man who's talking to Brody just off centre, and in the right hand side of the frame we can also see the back of Brody's head. This single shot communicates a powerful sense of depth and distance and also conveys how Brody is too busy staring with dread at the water to really listen to what anyone who is speaking to him is saying.

At 15'49 and 15'53 we have two more shots of young people playing in the water. In the context of fear and anxiety established in this sequence, their playful screams and the sound of splashing are nerve-racking. From 15'53 to 15'56 we have a quick succession of extremely quick cuts, each shot cutting to the next as children's hands splash the water.

At 16'10 we have an underwater POV shot of the approaching shark. Up until now the sequence has had no non-diegetic music. Here the music builds in intensity and tempo as the camera moves past the splashing legs of the other bathers and right towards the young boy seen earlier.

At 16'28 we have a brief shot in which other bathers are playing happily in the foreground but the boy, positioned just right of centre in the background, is being pulled under by the shark.

After a quick shot of a sunbather reacting to the boy's violent splashing we cut to a closer-shot of the action at 16:35. Here the boy is positioned in the centre of the frame, the sudden plume of red erupting from the water prompting a jolt of sudden terror.

At 16:37 we see an underwater shot of the boy being dragged under, as he disappears below frame, swells of blood rise up.

At 16:40 the most startling shot in the sequence occurs. Chief Brody is positioned in the very centre of the frame, staring directly ahead. At first the shot is a mid-shot, showing us Brody from the chest up with lots of empty space around him. As the shot continues there is an unsettling shift, Brody growing larger in the frame as the background seems to remain fixed in size. Here a Dolly Zoom or "Trombone Shot" has been used. In such a shot the camera tracks towards an object whilst its zoom lens zooms out from it. Or vice versa. The effect is always disorientating and it's usually used, as here, to show that a character has had a major revelation.

### **Sound and Music**

John Williams' music for *Jaws* remains one of cinema's most enduring and popular scores. Like Bernard Herrmann's music cue for the shower scene in *Psycho* or John Carpenter's theme from *Halloween* the main overture from *Jaws* has been copied and parodied countless times. And, like Herrmann and Carpenter's themes, its sinister central melody, that ever quickening shifting from E to F, has become a pop culture shorthand for impending terror.

Yet there's more to the music in *Jaws* than Williams' iconic theme. Consider, for example, how this foreboding non-diegetic music is contrasted with other sounds. In the film's opening minute, the titles appear over a POV sequence of the shark prowling the sea. Williams' music is used here to generate suspense and unease before the narrative itself has even begun. At 0'59, however, we immediately cut to young people partying on the beach at night, the non-diegetic score immediately giving way to the diegetic sound of a harmonica being played.

In the sequence beginning at 09'05, Brody strides purposefully out of his office and down the street. As he walks, we begin to hear the diegetic sounds of a nearby marching band. The use of this militaristic music in the background together with Brody's determined gait suggest perhaps that he's about to go to war.

When Quint, the grizzled shark hunter, is introduced, we hear him before we see him (19'59), his nails dragging down a blackboard.

In the sequence beginning at 45'30, sound effects and score are combined to create one of the film's most effective scares. As Brody dives to investigate the hull of the abandoned fishing boat the music quietly builds. At 46'17, as Brody uncovers a corpse, the music is disrupted by a sudden off-key shriek, like a distorted scream. At 46'20 Brody

tries to scream, dislodging his breathing apparatus. This moment is accompanied with a blood-curdling sound, half-scream, half-gurgle.

### **Camera and Framing**

At 07'02 there is an effective sideways tracking shot, following Brody and a witness as they walk along the dunes. The angle and framing chosen keep the two characters in the upper third of the screen, the composition used helping to convey the height of the dunes relative to the beach itself and giving us a firm sense of place.

At 07'45, as Brody is alerted to a discovery on the beach, Spielberg makes expert use of framing to establish suspense and unease. The shot places Brody and the witness in the background in the left of frame, gazing to their right. The sight they are seeing is not revealed, blocked from view by the Deputy in the foreground, his back turned on his gruesome find.

At 07'56 the gruesome find is revealed, a low angle camera shot showing a young woman's hand protruding from the sands, crabs scuttling around it.

At 17'46 to 18'15 there is a continuous tracking shot as Brody walks through a council building, surrounded by concerned citizens. The motion of the camera suggests activity and helps reinforce the sense of panic the shark attacks have caused. The fact that Brody is being pushed into the background whilst the Major and other citizens dominate the frame suggests that he is fast losing control of the situation.

Quint's introduction is given dramatic weight by the use of camera technique. When we first hear him speak (20'07) the camera tracks slowly towards him across a crowded room. At first he is in long shot but, as the camera advances, he grows larger in the frame until he is finally in close-up.

### **Lighting**

In the scene beginning at 36'12, low key lighting is used in this interior to help convey Brody's despair. With much of the film taking place in broad daylight, scenes which do not do so tend to have specific dramatic importance.

At 44'28 striking use is made of lighting, the search beam on Hopper's boat providing much of the illumination here. Note how the back-lit mist rolls past behind Brody and Hooper. The brightness of the search light is given further weight and solidity by the presence of a lens flare, a distinctive oval-shaped halo which can be seen around the edges of the search lamp. It is an effect often seen in Spielberg's films. At 44'37, in the same scene, the boat's searchlight is seen to backlight objects in the foreground as Hooper and Brody scan the waters. The distance between the camera and the search beam and the presence of mist creates a soft diffuse beam of light. At 44'49 the effect is even more striking, the beam from the searchlight eerily backlighting the abandoned fishing boat that our heroes find. Use of diffuse light is another of Spielberg's hallmarks.

## **Mise-en-Scene**

At 07'56 a gruesome find is revealed, a low angle camera shot showing a young woman's hand protruding from the sands. This partial reveal of what we assume is a half-devoured human body is extremely effective, more so, perhaps, than a gorier more detailed shot might have been. Most of the carnage is left to our imagination and the presence of crabs scuttling around the hand adds to a sense of the macabre.

At 08:43 the revelation that a Shark is responsible for the first attack is revealed not by dialogue but by a sly piece of visual exposition. Brody, listening to a call from the Coroner as he types up a report, types the words "Shark Attack" into the form. Here a vital piece of information is revealed to us purely through mise-en-scene.

At 17'42 there is another use of in-world written communication to deliver a plot point. In the wake of the young boy's death we cut to a close up of a sign pinned to a noticeboard, offering a \$3000 reward for whoever can slay the shark responsible.

Perhaps the most crucial use of Mise-En-Scene in Jaws is the decision to keep the shark hidden from view for most of the movie. Its absence from direct view generates suspense and mystery.

## **Editing**

In the sequence beginning at 24'29, Spielberg masterfully shows Brody reading up on sharks by cutting between extreme close-ups of the graphically illustrated pages he is poring over and tight close-up views of Brody himself, the pages reflected in his glasses. It is a brief sequence but one which extremely powerfully and wordlessly conveys the threat Brody must face.

In the sequence beginning at 45'30, sound effects and score are integral in creating one of the film's most effective and brilliantly staged scares. So too is the editing. As Hooper dives to investigate the hull of the abandoned fishing boat, a shot of him staring at a breach in the hull is held long enough to set us on edge. When the remains of the dead fisherman pop into view the effect is devastating. The tempo and timing of the cuts in this sequence give it the bulk of its emotional impact.

# Genre Study

## *Jaws* and the Horror Genre

Horror films explore the dark side of humanity, the forbidden, the strange and the uncanny. Horror films are designed to frighten and panic, cause dread and alarm, and to invoke our hidden worst fears, often in a terrifying, shocking twist and/or finale.

The Horror films produced in Hollywood by Universal Studios in the 1930s made the single greatest contribution to establishing the themes and popularity of the genre. Films such as *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931), combined the visual style of early German silent horror films from the 1920s along with a deep understanding of popular narrative forms.

However, with the outbreak of World War Two, the horror genre became less popular and in the 1950s the Old World terrors of films such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1933) had been supplanted by a new mutant form of the genre; the monster film. Technically the monster film's lineage can be traced back to *King Kong* (1933) but it is the 1950's when this sub-genre comes into its own with films like the giant ant epic *Them!* (1954) and the rampaging dinosaur movie *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), which terrified audiences. *Jaws*, though focusing on a monster which is rooted in nature rather than a fantastical creature such as the giant ants in *Them*, still follows many of the narrative patterns and conventions of a standard "Creature Feature."

## The Monster Film

The following genre elements are common to the Monster movie:

**A rampaging and dangerous monster.** Like Frankenstein's monster in *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1933) the monster might also be sympathetic on some level, a tragic persecuted figure pursued by intolerant humanity and using violence to defend itself. Usually the monster in such films is merely acting in its own interests, destroying and attacking humans out of necessity rather than malice.

**A stomping ground:** The shark in *Jaws*, for example, establishes itself in the waters around a small island off the coast of New England. A monster may come from an isolated locale like *King Kong*'s point of origin, Skull Island, but for a monster movie to have narrative drive the monster must, as Kong is when he is captured and taken to New York City, be placed in an environment where he or she can pose a threat to civilisation.

**A hero committed to the creature's destruction:** In *Jaws* our protagonist Brody is the character who drives the action and his quest to destroy the killer shark is the film's main narrative concern. Such heroes are common to the monster film and we, as audiences, become invested in their goals. The hero will usually triumph but often at great personal cost.

**Authority figures who refuse to properly acknowledge the threat posed by the monster:** In *Jaws* the intransigent authority figure is the Mayor, who believes it is more important to safeguard tourism than to protect swimmers from a dangerous predator. In *The Terminator*, for example, the LAPD refuse to believe that the eponymous villain is an

unstoppable robot assassin from the future. Their disbelief places the film's heroine in greater peril, ultimately leaving her to face the dangerous killing machine alone.

**A scientist:** For the audience to fully understand the threat posed by a monster it is necessary to have an authoritative scientist present to properly assess and articulate the dangers for us. Whilst Victor Frankenstein in *Frankenstein* is personally responsible for the creation of the monster and thus the most pivotal character in the movie, most scientists in monster movies are there to offer commentary and exposition. The character of Hooper in *Jaws*, though more shaded and three-dimensional than most monster movie scientists, is largely tasked with telling the hero Brody (and by extension the audience) just how dangerous the shark is. As with *Jaws*, it is usually the hero who confronts the monster alone.

Some monster films do, however, make more inventive use of their scientist figures. In *Alien* (1979), for example, the scientist figure, though a source of calm and rational exposition for most of the film, turns out to be just as dangerous and inhuman as the titular monster. The TV series *The X Files* and *Doctor Who*, meanwhile, though both heavily indebted to the monster film, present us with heroic scientists who use their skills to battle dangerous creatures.

## **Genre in *A Matter of Loaf and Death***

Taken as a whole, *A Matter of Loaf and Death* is perhaps best viewed as a comedic adventure. However, given that much of the comedy is derived from playing with various cinematic tropes and genre conventions, the film often plays like a sampler platter of various film genres. Genre conventions familiar to us from action cinema, science fiction and horror films are deployed throughout. As such, certain scenes and sequences work best if one is familiar with the specific film texts and broader genre conventions being referenced.

### **Sequence 1 – Gromit Turns Detective: (13'51" – 17'02")**

In this scene, Gromit uncovers Piella's plot by exploring her home. The sequence is very much indebted to the suspense thrillers of Alfred Hitchcock, particularly *Psycho* (1960). Indeed large chunks of this scene, such as the shots of Gromit advancing up the stairs directly homage the scene in *Psycho* in which a Detective makes a similar exploration of a similarly gothic house with dark secrets.

The use here of low key lighting, POV shots and the deployment of an editing tempo which increases as Gromit's intrusion seems more and more likely to be discovered, mark this scene as Hitchcockian. Though this sequence is ultimately as wryly amusing as everything else in the film it is a testament to Park's skills as a film-maker and storyteller that he manages to create so much genuine suspense here.

### **Sequence 2 – The Final Battle (23'55 to 27'30)**

The final confrontation between Piella and our heroes is shot, lit and edited in the style of an action movie. The action is fast and frenetic. The pace is exciting. There are also some specific homages to other film texts. Wallace's rescue from Piella is constructed as a homage to the climatic battle at the end of James Cameron's sci-fi action film *Aliens* (1986).