

# FILM EDITING



## Soviet Montage Theory — Definition, Examples and Types of Montage

*Soviet Montage Theory* is a film movement that took place in Soviet Russia during the 1910's, 20's and into the early 30's. It was founded by **Lev Kuleshov** while he was teaching at the Moscow Film School.

According to prominent Soviet director **Sergei Eisenstein**, there are five different types within Soviet Montage Theory: **Metric, Rhythmic, Tonal, Overtonal and Intellectual**.

The movement is widely known for changing the landscape of film editing around the world.

### Popular Soviet Montage Films

Kino-Eye (1924)

Battleship Potemkin (1925)

The Death Ray (1925)

Mother (1926)

Zvenigora (1927)

October: Ten Days That Shook the World (1928)

Man With a Movie Camera (1929)

A Simple Case (1932)

## What is montage in film?

The word 'montage' is rooted in the French language as a term to describe the connection of individual pieces, whether they be film, music or images, into a cohesive whole.

But to understand why montages became a major component of Soviet cinema, we have to first look at how the industry got to that point.

The Moscow Film School or VGIK was founded in 1919 during the midst of the Russian Revolution. One of the foremost professors at the School was **Lev Kuleshov**, who had begun experimenting with new ways of editing film by 1920.



### LEV KULESHOV

In 1923, Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks usurped control of the Russian government. What followed was a period of radical change, both socially and economically. Consequently, at this time it was incredibly difficult to find film stock in Russia, so instead, the people were left to study film rather than create it.

Kuleshov, along with his students, explored the process of film editing rigorously. During his professorship, Kuleshov released a short film that would go on to become the foundation of Soviet Montage Theory.

## Intellectual Montage

The idea behind Kuleshov's short film was to combine a single, center-framed shot of the popular actor Ivan Mosjoukine with three other distinct shots: The first is a bowl of soup, the second is a girl in a coffin, and the third is a woman lying on a couch.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=gGI3LJ7vHc&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=gGI3LJ7vHc&feature=emb_logo)

The goal behind this method was to create a montage where the combination of shots would evoke something different each time, such as hunger (soup), sadness (coffin) and desire

(woman.) Kuleshov was credited with pioneering the evoking of emotion through contrasting images, therefore the technique became known as the Kuleshov effect.

The Kuleshov effect is still widely used in cinema today, as it allows a filmmaker to communicate with the audience solely through editing.

## **Metric Montage**

Metric Montage is used to establish a visual pace. **Sometimes It's** inspired by the pacing of a musical score, AKA the meter. This is used to create a visual pace within a film scene by cutting to the next shot after a finite number of frames no matter what is happening on screen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfWzqKy1sFg&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfWzqKy1sFg&feature=emb_logo)

## **Rhythmic Montage**

Rhythmic Montage is used to keep to the pace, in both a visual and auditory sense.

This clip from Whiplash is a great example of the Rhythmic Montage because each shot keeps to the pace of the music, which ultimately creates an engrossing continuity.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZY-Ytrw2co&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZY-Ytrw2co&feature=emb_logo)

## **Tonal Montage**

The Tonal Montage is the use of two or more shots that support one another and build a theme, quite to the opposite effect of the Intellectual Montage. Here's a video essay on Parasite's montage; Director Bong Joon-ho crafts a scene which skillfully weaves integral themes of social inequality, deception, and infiltration.

As the name implies, the Tonal Montage helps to establish the tone of a scene through editing shots together that have the same thematic aim.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma1rD2OP85c&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma1rD2OP85c&feature=emb_logo)

## **Overtonal Montage**

The Overtonal Montage is a sort of amalgamation of the four other types of montages: Intellectual, Metric, Rhythmic and Tonal.

Perhaps the most famous scene of the Soviet Montage Theory is that of the Odessa Steps in Battleship Potemkin. This scene utilizes all four types of Montage filmmaking to expert effect.

One of the most enduring images of the scene is the baby in the carriage falling down a flight of stairs, which is a great example of the Intellectual Montage as it uses the tragic circumstances to evoke an emotional response from the audience.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5WbeoP\\_B8E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5WbeoP_B8E)

The Odessa Steps in Battleship Potemkin was expertly riffed on many films such as in Brian De Palma's American crime film *The Untouchables*.

This scene is one of the best examples of the influence of Soviet Montage Theory on international cinema. Let's look at the essential aspects inherent in a montage:

1. Establishes pace
2. Keeps to the pace
3. Evokes an emotional response
4. Exaggerates the emotional response through supporting and contrasting images.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJpRSf4g-hI&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJpRSf4g-hI&feature=emb_logo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH1tO2D3LCI>

## The Five Steps

Soviet filmmaker **Sergei Eisenstein**, who was once a student of **Lev Kuleshov**, is credited with outlining Soviet Montage Theory through the five steps we've just gone over.

Both Eisenstein and Kuleshov used the five steps of Soviet Montage Theory through their careers, which helped them to become some of the most influential technical filmmakers of all-time.



# The Kuleshov Effect Explained (and How Spielberg Subverts it)

## How Steven Spielberg Subverts The Kuleshov Effect

How Spielberg uses camera angles to create a “Point of Thought” to empathize with as they watch his work.

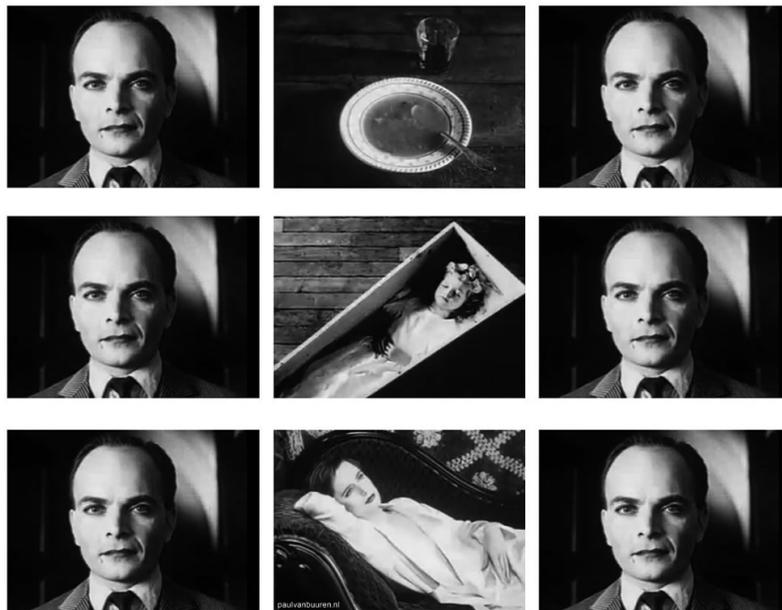
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=0XjJMFD-Vz8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=0XjJMFD-Vz8&feature=emb_logo)

## Modern examples in film and tv

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDuetkIFtDQ&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDuetkIFtDQ&feature=emb_logo)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdfwFDZGnUk&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdfwFDZGnUk&feature=emb_logo)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96xx383lpil&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96xx383lpil&feature=emb_logo)



THE KULESHOV EFFECT

			= NICE OLD MAN
			= DIRTY OLD MAN

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## **What is a reaction shot?**

A reaction shot is a cutaway shot of a person's response to an event or to a statement made by another.

The Kuleshov editing technique is so ubiquitous, Jonathan Demme lampooned it in *Silence of the Lambs* for one of the greatest editing fake-outs in film history.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHW2gU8eoS4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHW2gU8eoS4&feature=emb_logo)

Demme displayed masterful technique in controlling the viewer to believe one certain idea there while pulling the rug out from under them. But who's the greatest audience manipulator of all time?

## **Steven Spielberg's reaction shots**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6hc-Bk6Geg&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6hc-Bk6Geg&feature=emb_logo)

The Spielberg Face is usually a Close-up reaction shot to something awe-inspiring in front of the character.

It's Steven Spielberg's signature technique.

But Spielberg does something different than almost every other director when it comes to editing these reaction shots together.

Workshop : Kuleshov Effect & The Reaction Shot

Source

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/soviet-montage-theory/>

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/kuleshov-effect-examples/>