

Answering this question

The 4 Steps

1. **Explain** the story or production element

E.g. The highly effective use of camera shots and angles in Joel Schumacher's (1993) *Falling Down*

2. Give examples - **from a sequence/s** in the film

are evident in the Opening scene of the film, which establish the tension, and anxiety of the main character.

3. Use **film language** to explain how the element has been used (see notes below)

4. Explain the information it provides – the effect it has - or the mood it creates to engage the audience

Notes on Camera in the opening sequence : You do not need to use all the camera shots to address this question however you should select a pertinent sequence to demonstrate your understanding of the types of camera shots used and their effect

Opening sequence:

- Opens up on a black background, with bold white letters as titles, as this emphasizes them. There is a combination of broad and slim letters, which highlight the important distributor. There is an absence of sound beyond subtle deep breathing, which makes this opening foreboding. This lasts for approximately 19 seconds, intriguing the audience.

- The scene begins on an extreme close-up of a man's teeth, as the camera zooms out revealing his mouth. The audience then hears his breathing, with hints at a frustrated tone. It is the only sound audible. We then witness heavy sweat on his upper lip, as well as his face quickly being revealed, as the camera tracks back. Once his eyes are revealed in extreme close up - emphasizing worry, as his eyes are magnified behind large rimmed glasses – The camera pans to the right quickly, showing him from a side perspective. As this happens, the titles continue, with the leading role - 'MICHAEL DOUGLAS' - (the man being shown) stretched across in white, contrasting from the surroundings of the shot.

- The camera slowly tracks back, revealing more of his face, hair and shoulders, belonging to a businessman. He has been shot in shallow focus, with ambient lighting, emphasizing him and his reaction; he is the core of this scene. However, the audience can recognize through the use of a medium shot that he is inside a car, which is full of bleak colors, adding more to his bored mood, as well as an American flag in the background, which could hint at hope or patriotism. The title of the film is now revealed, lingering for 4-5

seconds, stretched and also in block white, due to the focus being on the surroundings of the shot.

- The camera slowly pans away from him, outside of the window and towards the front of the car, giving us a front-on shot. From here, we can now see more cars around him, highlighting that he is stuck in a traffic jam, due to no movement, which explains his stern expression. They are slightly out of focus, also adding to him being the main core of this shot. He appears distressed - almost panting - which shows he is uncomfortable.

- He goes on to close his eyes, almost as in frustration, whilst the camera tracks his sight downwards, revealing his tense hands on the steering wheel. The shades of the car - brown, cream - parallel his bleak life. As the camera tracks, a slight menacing, non-diegetic sound is heard, which is almost mystical and questioning

- The camera then tracks slowly to his eye level perspective, showing his view of the car in front. Smoke is coming from behind it, suggesting his clouded life, as well as him smelling rusty air. The camera zooms into the car's window, revealing a girl staring at him intensely, which represents him feeling constantly watched and pressured throughout his life. The camera continues to pan, revealing more cars, as well as them being roofed within a bridge, highlighting him feeling enclosed. A light is shown within the distance from the end of the tunnel, which is underlining for a possible positive ending or selective happiness for this individual

- The camera continues to pan along to the right at a slow-pace, showing a bus filled crammed with children, who are screaming and throwing objects out of the window. Bags have been rammed on top of the bus, crammed together also, both connoting his pressured and crowded mind. As the camera tracks, the American flag reappears, although taking up at least two thirds of the shot. Therefore, his American Dream may still be lingering, but he may possibly feel others are ruining it or getting in his way. This relates back to his previous bored persona, due to him maybe unable to retrieve his dreams as he is stuck in a rut. The camera continues, as the flag reflects onto a car's bonnet, emphasizing the American icon and its meaning. More trouble is found within this car, as two men argue, which shows that trouble is all around him. However, as diegetic noise is the main focus - as typical car noises can be heard, such as a car's radio - he only focuses on these, unable to acknowledge his own thoughts.

- The camera continues to be held by a crane - due to the broad freeway setting and space and no amount of cuts used, therefore focusing upon the mise-en-scene rather than edits - a long shot of stacked cars are revealed, stressing the traffic and the long journey (both physically and mentally) he may have before him in this film

- The camera then pans back towards the rear of his car, to enable the audience to retrieve his perspective and recall that he is the focus of this scene. He contrasts all the other noisy, boisterous people, as he sits alone yet appears distressed. Credits are shown throughout this slow but effective opening, lingering for about 2 seconds each with a 1 second gap.

- The first cut of this opening is of him from the front, of a medium shot, slapping a fly (we know this from the diegetic, buzzing sound), which represents his broken irritation. As well as this, his knuckles have clearly tightened around the steering wheel, hinting he may be able to break at any moment - relating to the plot of the movie

This opening sequence lasts for 2 minutes, 18 seconds.

