The idea of Cinematic Moments
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As a filmmaking practitioner, I have long believed that there is a disconnect between how theorists/academics conceptualise the way films are ultimately created and how this process happens in practice. One of the most commonly heard – and least understood – phrases in the process of making a film (from writing to directing and editing) is the idea of "what works." Filmmakers at various stages of the process talk about what works or what is going to work (or the opposite – what doesn't work), referring – for example - to the way a shot is set up, the way a performance plays out as drama, the way a scene comes together, or the way a piece of action is edited. Implicit in this phrase is the audience, or at least the finished film as a piece of art - presumably for an audience to experience. The filmmaker is bringing to bear all their tacit knowledge of not only the filmmaking process, but of the genre and the way audiences make sense of a movie as they watch.

And it seems to me that when filmmakers are assessing "what works" they are referring to structural elements of the movie that dont necessarily fit with text book definitions. Rather than focus on acts, scenes, frames etc – filmmakers seem to use a more fluid conceptualization of the unit of meaning making. I've come to call these CINEMATIC MOMENTS – that could be as short as a gunshot or as long as an slow emotional insight. Cinematic moments seem to signal new directions for the plot, new goals for a character or an insight that provides the audience with an enhanced understanding of character. Cinematic moments seem to contain critical information and/or are emotional charged. And it seems to me that filmmakers know that their audiences "read" the film in the same way.

A framework of the cinematic moment (below) establishes two fundamental attributes to the cinematic moment: its narrative function and its sensory characteristics. For each of these there are a number of *elements*. The table provides a description for each element.

	Categories	Elements	Description
Narrative function	**Plot**	To establish an understanding of the story world	Exposition of setting (place/time)
		To disturb story world equilibrium	A moment that sets off a causal chain of events or establishes the narrative objective
		To take action towards restoring a story world equilibrium	A character's attempt to achieve the narrative objective
		To resist the establishment of a story world equilbrium	A character's attempt to frustrate another character achieving an objective
		To establish a story world equilibrium	To create a sense of resolution
	Character	To illuminate surface level details about a character	To provide basic information about a character - appearance, occupation, habits
		To illuminate the values of a character	To show what a character believes in or has been socialised to believe in
		To illuminate the underlying personality traits of a character	To reveal the "true" nature of a character
Sensory Characteristics	**Visual** **what is seen**	Environment Inactive	A shot or scene of a setting (interior or exterior) where nothing is happening. Visual description
		Environment Active	A moment where the environment causes change in the story world
		Character Inactive	A shot or scene of a character who is doing nothing
		Character Active	A moment where one or more characters is doing something
		Stylistic visual	A visual device used to signal some aspect of narration
	Audio **what is heard**	Dialogue	The sound of a character speaking in the storyworld
		Non-diagetic dialogue	The sound of a voice-over (character or narrator external to the story world)
		Sound effects	Sounds added/manipulated to emphasise activity in the story world
		Score	Music added as non-diagetic material
		Atmosphere	Silence or ambient background

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