

## Opening Scenes

“Whirl up, sea—  
Whirl your pointed pines.  
Splash your great pines  
On our rocks.  
Hurl your green over us—  
Cover us with your pools of fir.”  
H.D., *Oread* (1916)

### *Film Opening Technique #1: Close-up shot, followed by zoom out*

We start with a line. An indentation.

You can depict air in motion with a set of three horizontal lines drawn in parallel, one above the other. You can suggest a gust or a change in direction by the flick or curve of a line's tail. The point is: a line is enough, and a whole weather system can hide inside of it.

Pay attention to the proximity of one line to another. The width between them can indicate pressure or intensity or a knot. Be aware that you cannot physically see wind, so you must determine the strength of a gale by the way it asserts itself over other objects. Wind, then, is about the push and the pull, about what we see when we are looking closely, and what we can predict.

There is freedom in the way the line skirts across the paper. Who is controlling this line—the hand that draws it, or the wind pushing the hand?

Zoom out and realise these are not just arbitrary lines, but lines in relation to other lines. That the lines pull themselves together. Notice how the lines arrange themselves into figures or waves or a cluster of islands or an isthmus dividing two bodies of water.

Take note of the edges of the archipelago and remember what you are looking at is the flicker of a place rather than a place in its entirety.

If the scene appears to be blurry, it is because the wind wants you to concentrate on the weather, not what the weather is pushing against.

### *Film Opening Technique #2: Wide, Medium, Close*

#### Wide:

America, 1968. Winter, which means January, or February. The start of a new year.

The world is convulsing, or the world feels as if it is on the cusp of something, or the world has set the air in motion. Air begins moving and turning and twisting; air starts undoing and untying, without sympathy, preference, or regard.

It is May and there are riots in Paris. Later, the filmmaker Chris Marker will describe the student uprisings as *a grin without a cat*.

It is November 5th, and Richard Nixon is elected.

(In another frame, in the America of 2020, political journalists will pause mid-interview, correct themselves on their assessment, and clarify that *this is not like 1968*.)

#### Medium:

An island. An island that sits on the eastern-most part of New York State.

The setting is a strip of land next to water, which we might, in warmer times, call a beach, but for now, we will call land-covered-in-snow. There is also water, choppy and irritated, looming behind it.



The needle scratches into the oil, carving out an image.  
We cannot see the paper.  
We cannot see the drawing.

*Film Opening Technique #5: Fragments, Parts, Things*

A flash or a glint, on film, something reflective, hanging suspended around the neck of one of the dancers. The work is a mirror.

*1968: the year that shattered America.*

A gale is defined as a surface wind speed of 34-40 knots.

The instrument for measuring wind is called a sonic anemometer. Its name is derived from *anemos*—the Greek word for wind.

January 1968 is Long Island's seventh coldest month on record.

A hand may dance just as a body may dance, but wind causes *everything* to dance.

What is certain is that our response to a gale is always the same: we lean into it and address it, rather than tipping back.

Wind speed is affected by *obstacles in the vicinity*.

Unruly overcoats and jackets, refusing to stay buttoned but still caught on shoulders and elbows, waving at the camera like flags.

Wind as a noun is air in motion, but wind as a verb is to turn, twist, plait, curl, brandish, or swing. To set a clock to the correct time. To lose one's breath; to have no air in the lungs, in most instances, because one has been punched in the stomach. To gain a second wind.

Jill Johnston (1968): *words are pictures are sounds are sights are touch are smell are the altogether forever. The artists are rampaging through the graveyards of the file cabinets to throw the alphabetized cards into the beautiful chaos of the altogether from whence they were so painfully extracted to make a mess called civilisation.*

Learn how to consider wind differently, especially in the moments it has nothing to cling to. If you stand firm when facing a breeze, it feels as if the current is only interested in you.

*Author's note:*

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Naomi Riddle, 2021

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