The makings of a movie: A summary of film style and film analysis

In many ways, interpreting films is similar to analyzing literature. Indeed, critical film watchers [film critics], watch movies just as we would read a book. They view film in great detail to see how it is put together, just as we breakdown the language of a book to get meaning from literature. When critics "read" films, they consider many different elements. However, for our purposes, we will only consider...

1. **Camera** - the way the picture is shot influences how we view the movie.
    i. **Different types of shots** - [see back for a list]
    ii.**Different Camera movements -**
        a.**Panning -**the camera follows a character across a room, panning [moving from side to side] to guide the audience's vision.
        b.**Tracking -** the camera pulling backwards or zooming out from a scene
    iii.**Mis-en-Scène -** French term meaning 'what is put into the scene. A director will place different things in the frame of the scene depending on the scene's setting, time period and

2. **Editing -** When film is completed the editing process begins. Here, you choose which shots to include in the film and the order in which you want to place them
    i. Selecting and ordering the shots - we automatically link a scene to what happens on either side of it, so a director must decide how to direct our attention
    ii. Joining the shots - shots can be join in a variety of ways
        a. Continuous [smooth] shots - promote a feeling of sequence.
        Ex. How the camera pans out as all three gun fighters get into position
        b. Short punctuated shots - create suspense
        Ex. When the camera keeps flashing between the gun fighters
        c. Establishing shots - show the context of the scene
        Ex. How the camera pans out to show the ring in which the gun fighters are positioned
        d. Slowed and Quickened shots - emphasize particular parts of the scene
        Ex. When the camera pans into the eyes of the gun fighters to try and capture that feeling of suspense.

3. **Visual Atmosphere -** a film is designed to engaged your visual as well as auditory senses. The visual atmosphere helps to engage the audience in the story.
    i. **Costumes -** reflect on the time and place of the scene
    ii. **Sets -** shows the circumstances of the scene and provides context for the characters
    iii.**Lighting -** creates a mood. Low light is scary, ominous or mysterious [often used in scary movies]. High light can be hopeful, happy and illuminating.
    iv. **Special Effects -** Add to the atmosphere of the scene. Explosions, computer graphics and/or sound effects can help set the stage

4. **Sound -** sound appears in film in two ways:
    i.**Diegetic -** these sounds are recognized as part of the film.
    Ex. Dialogue, music or sound effects that come from a place within the film world
    ii.**Non-Diegetic -** these sounds are additions that cannot be recognized within the film.
    Ex. voice overs or background music.

Things to remember: Films use both denotative [literal] and connotative [figurative] imagery to convey meaning. Just like novels, films are interpreted.