

# Year 10 Film Knowledge Booklet

## Skyfall

Name:

Class:



## Skyfall (Mendes, 2012) : Summary

The film begins in Istanbul, where James Bond ([Daniel Craig](#)) finds fellow MI6 agent Ronson critically wounded and the hard-drive of a nearby laptop missing, the contents of the hard-drive not yet revealed. Bond gives chase to the enemy, a professional hitman by the name of Patrice ([Ola Rapace](#)), with the help of MI6 operative Eve ([Naomie Harris](#)), first by car, then by motorbike across the tiled roofs of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar, until finally the two men end up on a train. Bond is shot in the shoulder by Patrice whilst trying to make his way onto Patrice's car. The two then begin fighting hand-to-hand on top of the moving train, whilst further up the line Eve has taken position with a rifle ready to take out Patrice. Bond and Patrice are still grappling with each other, denying Eve a clear shot. M ([Judi Dench](#)) gives the order for Eve to take the shot, which she does. Bond is hit and falls into the river below, seemingly dead.

A few months later, M begins writing Bond's obituary. The next day she is ordered to a meeting with Gareth Mallory ([Ralph Fiennes](#)), the chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee. Mallory reveals that the missing hard drive contains the names of every undercover NATO agent embedded in terrorist organisations around the world. Mallory suggests that because of M's poor handling of the situation she should retire, or rather be forced to retire with full honours. She refuses and heads back to work. On the way there M's assistant Bill Tanner ([Rory Kinnear](#)) discovers that someone is remotely hacking MI6's database from M's computer. They hurry back to MI6 headquarters, but are stopped by police forming a roadblock just outside the building. As M is about to protest to the police officers, a large explosion rips through part of the building, killing several employees.

Meanwhile, Bond is alive in some tropical paradise enjoying nights of alcohol and women. He has faked his death and is simply hiding out. However, he decides to cut his vacation short when he sees a CNN news broadcast about the attack on MI6.

Upon returning to London, Bond confronts M at her house, where she tells him that he has been declared deceased and his property put in storage. He asks to rejoin the service, M agrees but tells him he will have to retake the tests to become a field agent again. Bond is taken to MI6's new base underground and his evaluation begins.

Bond finds himself in poor physical shape. He also finds it difficult to remaster his marksmanship. He painfully removes some of the shrapnel left in his shoulder from where Patrice shot him and sends it off for analysis.

Bond is called in to see M, meeting Eve along the way, who has been suspended from field duty and is now assisting Mallory in his transition to M's position. In M's office, Bond is surprised that one of M's less-tasteful desk ornaments, a white china bulldog with a Union Jack flag painted on its back, survived the explosion. M tells Bond he has barely passed his reassessment, and can resume normal service. Bond meets Mallory for the first time; Mallory tells him not to "cock it up" in relation to his new mission.

The analysis of the shrapnel from Bond's shoulder indicates that it consists of a specialized form of depleted uranium that is used by only a handful of operatives in the world. When shown photos of three people who use such ammunition, Bond immediately recognizes Patrice. Tanner notes that Patrice is a professional hitman, and is also a ghost, with no other known names or aliases. They have word from the CIA that Patrice will be in Shanghai in two days, possibly on another job. M orders Bond to travel Shanghai to find Patrice, interrogate him for the list, then kill him in retaliation for the death of Ronson. After Bond leaves, Tanner inquires about Bond's return to the field, saying he didn't know that Bond had passed his evaluation. M tells Tanner that Bond didn't pass.

Beforehand, she sends Bond to an art gallery to meet the new Quartermaster, or "Q" ([Ben Whishaw](#)). Q is young man, who gives Bond a radio locator and new model Walther PPK with a hand-print sensor that makes the pistol usable only by Bond.

Bond travels to Shanghai and follows Patrice from the moment he arrives at the airport. Patrice takes a taxi to a skyscraper in the middle of town. As Bond watches from his car, Patrice shoots the security guard on duty with a suppressed pistol, then gets on the elevator. Bond follows him in and hitches a ride by grabbing a bar on the underside of the elevator cab. When Patrice reaches his floor he enters a server room, closely followed by Bond. He makes his way over to a window, assembles a sniper's rifle, and cuts a circular hole in the glass. Patrice aims his rifle through the hole, training it on an

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elderly Chinese businessman meeting with a mysterious woman in a building across the street. As two bodyguards pull back a sheet to show the businessman a valuable work by Amedeo Modigliani, Patrice fires his rifle, hitting the man in the back of the head.

At that moment, Bond attacks and wrestles Patrice for control of the weapon. After a short struggle, Patrice is pushed through a broken window, but before he falls, Bond grabs his right arm and demands to know who his employer is. Patrice doesn't respond, Bond loses his grip, and Patrice falls to his death. Across the street, the mystery woman stares at Bond until he disappears under cover of darkness. Bond finds a casino chip from Macau amongst Patrice's equipment.

Back in London, M looks at her computer. A message comes to her in the form of a "Click here to claim your prize" ad. When she clicks "here," a YouTube video comes up: their mystery attacker has posted the identities of five agents, and he promises to release five more every week. One of the messages in the communique reads "Think on your sins".

Back at his hotel room, Bond receives an unexpected visit from Eve, who breaks the news as to what is going on in London. As they flirt, Eve shaves Bond's face and neck for him. Afterwards, Bond travels to the casino, hands in the chip and is given a briefcase containing 4 million euros for the assassination by the cashier, who mistakenly believes Bond to be the hitman. When Bond receives the money, he spots the woman he'd seen in Shanghai. She reveals her name, Sévérine ([Bérénice Marlohe](#)) and asks Bond to buy her a drink. Bond sits at the bar and talks to Sévérine. Although she sounds polite and even smiles several times, it looks very artificial. As they talk, Bond notices that Sévérine keeps looking at her three bodyguards nervously, and deduces that they are controlling her, not protecting her. When Bond tells her he wants to meet her employer, she becomes increasingly nervous and gets up to leave. Bond stops her, mentioning the tattoo on her right wrist indicating that she used to be in the Macau sex trade. Sévérine warns Bond that he is about to be killed, but should he survive he should meet her at her yacht and then kill her employer.

Bond is attacked by Sévérine's bodyguards as he leaves the casino. He uses the briefcase to beat two of them before he is tackled off a footbridge by the third into a pit of Komodo dragons. The third henchman grabs Bond's "signature" pistol and tries to shoot him, but the palm-print ID won't let the gun activate itself. At that point, the henchman is grabbed by the Komodo dragons and dragged off into the darkness to be eaten. When Bond is climbing back up onto the bridge, one of the other two henchmen aims a pistol at him and prepares to shoot him, but Eve disarms him. Bond gives Eve the case with the money, telling her "Put it all on red. It's the circle of life." Bond makes it to Sévérine's yacht and hitches a ride, joining her as she takes a shower.

Back in London, some of the undercover agents who were identified in the YouTube video have been executed and their deaths have been posted on the web. Mallory tells M that the Prime Minister has ordered her to appear before an inquiry. M is reluctant, but Mallory is insistent that MI6 be accountable to the people they are protecting, that there are no more shadows to hide in. M counters that the person who is targeting them is from the same place Bond comes from, the shadows.

The next morning, Bond and Sévérine's yacht is approaching an island full of derelict buildings. Before he meets with his host, Bond activates Q's small radio device. Sévérine suggests that they turn back, but the other crew on the boat surround them. Bond and Sévérine are taken hostage and their hands are bound. As they walk through the deserted streets, Sévérine reveals that her employer manipulated everyone who used to live there into evacuating overnight by using a computer to make them think the chemical plant had a leak. At that point, Bond and Sévérine are separated and taken separate ways by the henchmen.

Bond is taken to a room full of computer servers where he is tied to a chair. As he sits down, an elevator descends from above at the other end of the room. The doors open, and off steps Raoul Silva ([Javier Bardem](#)). Silva reveals that he is a former MI6 agent whom M betrayed by leaving him to be imprisoned and tortured at the hands of the enemy; M apparently gave him up because she felt his methods were too dangerous. Silva also reveals that M has sent Bond out on a mission despite the fact that Bond failed all of his tests, seem shaking Bond's trust of her.

Bond and Silva then head out to a courtyard where Sévérine is standing, tied up and beaten. Silva places a small shot glass of whiskey on Sévérine's head, chides her to stand up straight, and then challenges Bond to shoot the glass off her head. Bond's shooting hand is unsteady, and misses (perhaps deliberately) but Silva wastes no time in shooting her in the forehead. Bond suddenly overpowers and kills Silva's men, but leaves Silva alive. Silva is baffled that Bond wants to send him back to M by himself. Bond then produces the radio transmitter Q gave him, revealing that he isn't alone. On cue, MI6 helicopters descend over the island.

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Back at MI6's underground HQ, Silva has been placed in an elaborate isolation cell. M confronts Silva about his attacks, but he questions her as to why she abandoned him, showing her how his hydrogen cyanide capsule failed to kill him and left his face deformed - it destroyed much of his upper jaw, some of his teeth and his left cheekbone, forcing him to wear a prosthetic. M counters Silva's chiding, saying she'll have his name struck off the memorial wall of MI6. Finding herself having to attend a public hearing with the MP, M leaves, visibly shaken. On her way out, she charges Bond and Q with inspecting Silva's laptop for any evidence. She also tells Bond that Silva's real name is Tiago Rodriguez and that he was one of MI6's best agents, who worked out of Hong Kong before the turnover of the protectorate to China in 1997. When he began to operate outside of MI6's authority, M gave him up to the Chinese government in return for several agents they held as prisoners and the peaceful handover of Hong Kong in 1997.

While Bond watches, Q attempts to access Silva's computer, hooking it up to the MI6 system. He notices that Silva has failsafe protocols that only about six people in the world are capable of creating. Eventually, they manage to decrypt the files. Q determines that Silva's files use obfuscated code to conceal their true purpose.

In his cell, Silva confidently stands up and stretches, zipping up his shirt. A guard asks him if he is going somewhere.

Meanwhile, M and Tanner are in a tribunal overseen by MP Claire Dwyer. The inquiry board carefully scrutinizes and criticizes M for her lack of proper handling of the security breaches and for the deaths of her agents.

In Q's lab, Q finds that Silva is using a polymorphic engine to keep his computer coded. Bond notices that some of the letters in the decoder form two words: Granborough Road, which Bond recalls is an abandoned Metropolitan line tube station. Using the word Granborough as a key, the coding on the big screen transforms into a map of subterranean London.

Suddenly, the glass trap doors in the floor flip open, to Q's confusion. Bond realizes Silva has hacked them again. Then the words "System Security Breach" show up on the monitor, followed by a skull and the message "NOT SUCH A CLEVER BOY." Q quickly unhooks the computer, trying to contain the viral upload.

Bond sprints through MI6 headquarters to Silva's cell, but when he gets there, it's too late: Silva has killed both of his guards and vanished. Bond notices that a maintenance hatch in the floor has been removed, and spots Silva escaping into the tunnels. Bond travels down a stairway. Further down the tunnel, he can see Silva heading down another stairway. Bond makes his way down the stairs, draws his pistol, and goes through a service door, finding himself in a London Underground tunnel.

As Bond walks down the track, Q tells him via headpiece that Silva has clearly spent years planning his move, blowing up the regular headquarters aware that MI6 would move down here, and aware of every emergency protocol. Bond returns that he's worried about what happens next: Silva goes after M personally. He gets to the next service door, but to his dismay, it's jammed. He panics, especially when he hears a train approaching. Bond struggles to push the door open, and eventually resorts to shooting the lock, narrowly jumping into the service tunnel just a second before the train goes by.

Silva, meanwhile, makes his way down a stairway at Temple tube station. He comes upon two of his henchmen, dressed as police officers, who slip Silva a package as they pass. Bond enters the tube station through another maintenance door, blending in with a large crowd of commuters. A train pulls into the station. As passengers begin boarding and exiting, Bond asks Q to check the camera feeds for Silva, so he can be sure whether to get on the train. Q is unsure, due to the large size of the crowd. Being one person, he is unable to look at all the feeds at once and he fails to immediately notice Silva boarding the train, now disguised as a police officer. The doors close and the train begins to leave the station, just as Q finally sees that Silva is on board. Bond runs after the departing train, managing to latch onto the last car just in the nick of time. A bystander observes that Bond is "keen to get home."

Claiming to be from Health and Safety, Bond gets the operator to open the door and let him on. Bond walks through each car on the train, searching for Silva. Silva, sensing that Bond has gotten on, is making his way towards the front of the train, one step ahead of Bond. Bond notices that the next stop is Westminster; Bond realizes Silva is heading for M.

Meanwhile, M's inquiry hearing is going as well as one would expect. There is a brief disruption when Tanner receives messages from Q that Silva has escaped. He tries to warn M, but M refuses to leave and look like a coward.

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When the train pulls into Westminster, Silva bolts from the first car, and Bond bolts from the second car. Bond pursues him on foot through the crowded tube station. He loses track of Silva momentarily after sliding down an escalator banister. Silva smirks as he manages to avoid being noticed by blending in with some other police officers on patrol in the station. Silva then enters another tunnel through an unmarked door, followed by Bond.

At the hearing, Mallory interrupts MP Dowd for going on for too long, realizing that the hearing is becoming more like a kangaroo court.

Bond follows Silva down a dimly lit corridor into a cavernous room. Seeing Silva's shadow on the other side of the room, Bond picks up his pace. He catches up to Silva just as Silva is climbing a ladder to escape, and fires his pistol several times, missing. Silva acts annoyed that Bond missed him. Bond warns that he won't miss the next time he shoots. Silva replies in kind by showing Bond the latest thing from his 'toy store': a radio. He presses a button, setting off an explosive charge destroying part of the ceiling. Bond asks if that was meant for him. Silva laughs, saying "No! But that is." Just then, a train comes crashing through the freshly detonated hole. Bond dives for cover while Silva escapes.

Silva makes his way to the surface. As he exits the station, a police car driven by his henchmen drives up. Silva climbs in and the car takes off.

As Silva makes his way towards the tribunal, M gets her chance to speak at the inquiry hearing. She talks about how the questions thrown her way as to why MI6's -00 agents are still relative. She states that she sees a different world than they do, and she sees a truth that frightens her: their enemies are no longer known to them. They do not exist on the map, they are not nations, they are individual people. She suggests the other people in the room look around and ask, "What do you fear?"

Meanwhile, Silva and his two men arrive at the tribunal building. The henchmen raise their pistols and shoot the guards manning the security checkpoint without dropping a beat. Simultaneously, Bond emerges from Westminster tube station just as real police and firefighters arrive. He takes off running as fast as he can in the direction of the tribunal building.

M finishes her statement by stating her late husband was a great poetry lover, and some of the poems he read have hit a nerve with her. She quotes Tennyson: "We are not now that strength which in old days moved earth and heaven. That which we are, we are. One equal temper of heroic hearts, made weak by time and fate, but strong in will. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Just as M says the last word, the doors at the back of the courtroom fly open and Silva and his men walk in, pistols drawn. Spectators start to stand and scramble, and Mallory leaps over the table, as Silva shoots a bystander sitting at M's table. The police officers guarding the room try to draw their pistols, but are either shot dead by Silva's men or forced to take cover. The board members and bystanders dive for cover, giving Silva a clean shot at M. As he trains his pistol at M, the two stare at each other for several seconds. As Silva prepares to shoot M, Mallory pushes her down. Silva fires, the bullet hitting Mallory in his left shoulder.

As Bond gets closer to the tribunal building, Silva and his men exchange fire with officers on the sides of the room. He enters the building, pistol drawn, and kicks open a side door to the courtroom just as an officer positioned by that door is shot dead. Bond raises his pistol and fires several rounds at Silva, who dives behind a bench and fires back. Bond sees the officer's pistol lying on the floor. He kicks it over to Eve, who pops up and fires several suppressive rounds at Silva. Another officer stationed in the doorway opposite Bond immediately breaks cover, but is shot dead by Silva. Silva then resumes firing at Bond. Mallory sees an opportunity, and breaks cover, grabbing the second officer's pistol while under fire from one of Silva's two men. After a quick exchange, Mallory shelters in the archway of the door, and fires. Several more bullets hit the henchman, and he falls dead. Sometime in this exchange, the other henchman is killed.

Bond's gaze goes from Mallory to a pair of fire extinguishers. He shoots both of them, creating a smokescreen in an effort to drive Silva out of the way. Bond fires several rounds into the smoke, missing. Silva fires two rounds in reply. He then kills a bystander breaking cover, and walks outside to his getaway car, which drives off just as Bond gets outside.

Tanner rushes M out another door to a waiting car. Just as M's door closes, it takes off before Tanner can get in. Bond is driving the car. As they drive away from the scene, Bond calls Q and asks him to make a phony trail for Silva to follow, in efforts to draw him out of hiding. That night, they change



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cars to prevent them from easily being tracked; Bond switches to his old Aston Martin DB5, with all the defense systems still working. Bond's logic is that any official car used by M and MI6 will be too easily traceable.

Q and Tanner get to work creating an unofficial trail for Silva to follow. Mallory, now wearing a sling as a result of the bullet wound from Silva, surprises them while they are working. They are about to provide an excuse for their actions, but he deduces what they are doing and tells them to carry on.

Bond and M travel to Scotland to 'Skyfall', the Bond family estate. There they meet shotgun-wielding estate gamekeeper Kincade ([Albert Finney](#)), who offers his assistance in fighting Silva and his men. With the family's rifle collection sold off months ago, the trio improvise a series of booby-traps around the house in preparation for Silva's expected assault. Kincade tells M a bit of Bond's childhood history: his parents died when he was very young, and James hid in the tunnel leading from the house to the chapel on the moors. Kincade also gives Bond his father's hunting rifle, saying he couldn't bear to see it sold.

The first wave of Silva's men approach, and are taken care of by the booby traps, the DB5's machine guns, Bond and Kincade. However, M is hit in the abdomen by a bullet. The second wave and Silva himself approach by helicopter. Bond orders Kincade and M to escape through the tunnel while he holds off the assault. Bond is pinned down by heavy machine gun fire from the helicopter and by Silva throwing grenades into the house. Bond improvises by blowing up two gas canisters with dynamite. The resulting explosion destroys the helicopter, much of the house and kills all but Silva and two of his men. Bond escapes through the same tunnel as Kincade and M. Silva spots Kincade's torch (flashlight) in the distance and sets off in pursuit. Bond takes a shortcut across a frozen pond but is stopped short by Silva and two of his henchmen. Bond knocks out the first henchmen and kills the second by choking him beneath the surface of the ice. He arrives at the chapel to find Silva asking M to shoot both of them and end their misery. Bond throws a knife into his back, killing him, but M succumbs to her bullet wound and dies, leaving Bond distraught.

Bond returns to London, where Eve finds him on a rooftop, contemplating the skyline. She hands him a small box and tells him that M's will had been read that morning, and that she had left Bond something. He opens it to find the white china bulldog with the Union Jack nestled in tissue paper, and smiles. Eve tells him that she has declined fieldwork and taken a desk job, revealing that her last name is "Moneypenny." Bond walks through a tufted leather door beyond Eve's desk and into a familiar-looking office; Mallory has been appointed the new M and hands Bond an assignment folder asking Bond if he's ready to go back to work. Bond replies, "With pleasure, Sir."

The film closes with a new gun barrel sequence, a 50th anniversary logo, and a title stating "James Bond will return."



## Component 2: Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style

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#### Focus Areas Film Style, Aesthetics

##### **PART 1: Key Sequence(s) and timings**

Sequence 1 Istanbul chase 00:00 - 00:06:43

Sequence 2 Silva's lair 1:09:24 - 1:14:00

##### **PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features) Cinematography (including Lighting)**

Skyfall opens unusually for a Bond film. Instead of the 'roaming circle' ident, there is just the silhouette of a figure, out-of-focus; he strides forward, into focus, but with only a patch of light illuminating part of his face. What does this mean? He is obviously Bond, but introduced in this way he seems unfamiliar and mysterious. This suggests that this is a new 'vision' of Bond, promising something we haven't seen before. It also links to the theme of MI6 working "in the shadows" (as M says later). The shot composition is symmetrical, with Bond in the centre - this is a motif repeated throughout the film (see 'Aesthetics').

**Sequence 1:** Mostly typical - but very effective - mix of whole range of shots and angles: CU/ MS/POV used to emotionally engage us and immerse us in the action; LS, ELS and helicopter shots used to show larger scale action and produce a sense of spectacle. Additionally, Roger Deakins, the cinematographer, uses kinetic camera movement to follow the action, but keeps the camera steady (cf. to the 'jerky-cam' of the Bourne series) which suggests that Bond is in control of the situation despite the chaos the chase creates.

- Throughout the film the action appears to come 'straight at' the viewer (e.g. Bond's gun at the start, the jeep crashing into the stall, and the police motorbike skidding directly into the camera). This heightens the immersive quality of the sequence and intensifies the sense of danger.

- **Sequence 2:** LS used to show the scale of Silva's island lair - but also to show the wrecked, crumbling architecture. Shots are composed so that Bond is always in lower centre of the screen. This composition is also used in the hall where Bond is tied up. The shot is symmetrical, one small man surrounded by technology, apparently isolated and besieged. However his central position throughout the film suggests stability, solidity and sense of control even when seemingly overwhelmed by elements in the rest of the shot.

- When Silva enters: a single shot of him approaching Bond (and us) - mirroring the entrance of Bond in the opening shot of the film (small, indistinct figure, striding into view). As he

gets closer, the camera moves to meet him, eventually becoming Bond's POV. The movement reduces the distance between them and the proximity creates danger, but also queasy intimacy (suggesting the two characters aren't that different).

#### Mise-en-Scène

**Sequence 1:** All the elements of the generic chase sequence are thrown into the mix here: chases on foot, car, bike and train; with bystanders dodging the carnage, other vehicles crashing, windows to crash through, bridges and rooftops to fall off - all adding to the sense of danger. Plus: the London HQ has large screens and computer monitors that surveil the action from afar. The colour palettes used in the two locations are contrasting: oranges, browns, dirty/dusty, chaotic and crowded in Istanbul vs. cold navy blues and pale washed-out colours for London, connoting relative calm.

**Sequence 2:** Though Severin states the island city shows Silva's power via the use of technology, his victory seems literally empty. It looks more like the war-ravaged architecture of Aleppo than the glittering techno-lairs of other Bond villains (e.g. You Only Live Twice's volcano, The Spy Who Loved Me's underwater city). Similarly, the heart of his lair is a crumbling hallway filled with dusty servers and wires - far from the bright, clean or glamorous location we would expect. This is the tawdry 'reality' behind his 'virtual' power.

#### Editing

**Sequence 1:** Cutting between shots that create a spectacle - LS, ELS, helicopter shots (esp. during rooftop bike chase) - and those that create a sense of immersion: MS, CU and POV.

**Cross-cutting:** Between Istanbul and London (to show Bond is both being assisted by technology, and that he's being held accountable by higher authority); and between Bond, London and Eve (in the jeep) once the bike chase begins. This introduces the core theme that no matter how advanced surveillance technology we have, there is still a need for 'field agents' to do the more traditional chasing, shooting and fighting.

**Sequence 2:** As Bond waits for the arrival of his nemesis, there are cutaways to his calm face, showing that though he may be prisoner - and surrounded by the technology that threatens his ability to protect his country - he is calm and almost amused by the familiarity of his situation.

#### Sound

**Sequence 1:** Unusual use of music - opening two chords of traditional Bond theme, then stops: again suggesting this may

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be a version of the character that is unfamiliar; similarly used during the bike chase.

**Dialogue:** Jokes during car chase, when Eve smashes the wing mirrors off. Emphasises the danger of the narrow streets, Eve's control of the jeep, and their control of the situation: calm enough to make quips. Also shows Eve can match Bond with wit, establishing her as not 'just another Bond girl'.

### Sequence 2:

Severin's explanation of why the island is deserted emphasises the almost godlike power that technology has given Silva. When we finally meet him, Silva's speech about the rats on his grandmother's island is typically cryptic and sinister (mocked as 'monologuing' in *The Incredibles*). His revelation that M lied about Bond's test scores again asserts that Silva is Bond's 'dark double': what we previously interpreted as M's pride and confidence in Bond, Silva interprets as betrayal.

### PART 3: STARTING POINTS - Contexts

#### Social

Representation of age/tradition vs youth/ modernity: a core theme of the film is whether Bond, M and their agency is 'out of step' with the more technological threats of the modern world. Are they "dinosaurs" (how she branded Bond in her first film as M), powerless to the point of incompetence? This theme is made explicit when Bond meets the new, youthful Q in the National Gallery and they interpret a Turner painting differently: Q sees a "once great ship towed to the junkyard", whilst 007 ignores complexity and nuance: "I just see a bloody great big ship". Is his blunter, straightforward approach what is actually needed to defend against the 'new breed' of cyber-criminal?

#### Historical

*Skyfall* is similar to two other successful franchises that were 're-booted' around the same time: *Batman* (in Nolan's *Dark Knight* Trilogy) and *Star Trek*. All three take familiar characters that have grown almost comical, and add depth, humanity and darker, more complex themes. They also cleverly balance fresh perspectives and elements with iconography that is familiar to fans. In *Skyfall*, the references to Bond's past haunting the present becomes a source of danger (Silva) and power: his Walther PPK gun, the Aston Martin, with the *Skyfall* estate of his childhood a fresh element that provides back-story.

### PART 4: STARTING POINTS - Specialist Focus - AESTHETICS

The film is an accomplished fusion of character, theme and visual style. Though the cinematography and production design is striking, it is more than just 'style over substance'.

There are three key visual motifs throughout: 1. A blue/orange colour scheme that symbolises the thematic conflict between the new, digital technology and the 'old school' espionage of chases, fisticuffs and gunfights. Electric blues (especially in the Shanghai scenes) represent the 'virtual' power of technology, bright, shiny but intangible and distracting. Orange/brown symbolises the tangible (if physically dangerous) 'dirty realism' of the solid world that Bond is expert at negotiating. (2 FURTHER KEY VISUAL MOTIFS ON NEXT PAGE.)

2. Mirrors / doubles / reflections: the symmetrical composition of many shots, and use of actual reflections, symbolise two things: the way the 'actual' and 'virtual' worlds are connected; and the connection between Silva and Bond. Both are agents who "overstep the mark", both have been 'betrayed' by M in the service of their country. Like *Batman* and the *Joker* in *The Dark Knight*, they are two sides of the same coin.
3. The consistent framing of shots that places Bond (or M) at the centre establishes them as a stable, dependable presence in a changing, chaotic world, reassuring the audience of their relevance. The second to last scene of Bond staring out over London suggests he is a champion and protector of Britain (a shot familiar from superhero films). The presence of other national flags flying above their embassies suggests he is also a protector of the whole





## Public Service and Public Duty: National Identity and Bond 23.0

Harry Cunningham explores national identity in *Skyfall*, arguing the twenty-third James Bond film is the most distinctly British instalment of them all.

A key aspect of British culture has always been a sense of public duty, with characters determined to carry out their orders, regardless of danger or their own feelings. And the latest James Bond film, lauded by critics and described by some as the best Bond ever, is certainly no exception.

In the opening prologue, we see Bond so determined to get the, as yet unnamed, villain, that he is prepared to go to extreme lengths, including chasing the bad guy on a motorcycle through the rooftops of Istanbul and using a JCB digger to uncouple a train carriage and climb on board.

As the scene progresses, serious tensions begin to arise as another junior MI6 agent (later revealed to be Miss Moneypenny), who has been following Bond around in a truck, is forced to make an impossible decision. With Bond now fighting his enemy on top of the train, and with a tunnel approaching, Moneypenny is told to take a shot. In extreme close-up we see the panicked look upon her face as she protests to M that her 'shot is not clean,' but, with M becoming increasingly more irate, telling her to 'take the bloody shot,' she caves in and realises that following M's order to shoot is more important than her own judgement. Her fears are realised as a wounded and apparently dead Bond plunges from the train and into the river. M's reaction when she hears the news is not to apologise or to admit that her judgement was wrong but to turn around and stare absently out of the window and to the river Thames below, keeping her cool. It is also interesting that at the end of the film we are told that Miss Moneypenny, on the informal advice of James Bond, has opted for an office job rather than as a field agent. Her slight wavering over M's orders on firing the shot is perhaps a contributing factor in this decision.

Another key moment in which we learn that public service and public duty is the most important facet of an MI6 agent is when Bond

returns from the dead. M informs him that if he is to continue as a field agent he must pass a series of tests. In montage we see Bond wearing an oxygen mask, on a running machine and working out, all the time whilst wired up to a computer, measuring his every exercise. He is unshaven, struggles for breath and caves in when an official reminds him that he can 'always [complete the tests] later'. At one point we even see him in silhouette alone and collapsed in a heap on the floor. In target practice he not only misses but seems to be constantly aware that he is under observation. He lacks the ultra-confidence, bordering on arrogance, that we have seen in previous films featuring Daniel Craig's Bond.

In the final scene in which he is required to play a word association game with a counsellor, it must be obvious to any observant viewer that he has not passed any of these tests; he is not fit for duty. This is later confirmed by Silva, who has hacked M's computer, yet Bond's utter devotion to his job and unflinching ability to perform his duty means his public service is more important to M than the fact he is not physically fit enough to continue working in the field.

### The Public Inquiry

One of the most intriguing and certainly one of the most current set pieces of *Skyfall* is the public inquiry. Rather than retaliating to a terrorist attack by violence and invasion, true to British spirit, M must first dissect what went wrong in a televised public hearing. M's performance here is seen to be just as crucial as Bond's fieldwork. Indeed M's own job relies on her performance, as Mallory has threatened her with early retirement. Again, her sense of public duty overwhelms everything else: rather than retiring quietly as Mallory had offered, she insists on fighting on.

Indeed the way the hearing is shot highlights just how important it is. For it is intercut with shots of Silva's escape and of Bond's chase. As M appears to be failing so too does Bond. Bond loses Silva in a tube station, whilst M is being completely roasted by the committee. As Bond realises that Silva is actually heading for M and the inquiry, he tells her to leave the building immediately. M refuses to do so, due to both

## Public Service and Public Duty: National Identity and Bond 23.0

her sense of duty and also because leaving would cause catastrophic damage to MI6's reputation - which is arguably just as bad as an agent failing in the field. Indeed the chair of the committee, describing field work as 'old fashioned', tells M:

*"It as if you insist on pretending we still live in a golden age of espionage where human intelligence was the only resource available."*

This implies that the committee, and perhaps the public, both real and fictional, finds MI6's work redundant: M, therefore, is fighting not just for her own survival but for that of the entire organisation in its current form and, given the relatively mediocre reviews of *Quantum of Solace*, for the continuation of the series.

But M turns it around with a rousing speech that is nothing short of Churchillian. As she speaks to the committee in mid shot (providing glimpses of the TV cameras, policeman and journalists watching) Silva is poignantly seen making his way through the streets of London - the streets that M and MI6 are trying to protect. Thomas Newman's soundtrack 'Tennyson', with its staccato strings, is key to setting the tone here.

'I suppose I see a different world than you do,' M says, now in a wide shot that captures her at the centre of the inquiry bench as if she has regained control of the situation. She adds, She adds, perhaps alluding to the threat posed by Al-Qaeda:

*"I am frightened because our enemies are no longer known to us, they do not exist on a map, they are not nations, they are individuals."*

As Silva marches into the building, callously shooting down the guards who stand in his way, M says:

*"Our world is not more transparent now, it's more opaque. Before you declare us irrelevant ask yourself how safe do you feel?"*

But it is as if the committee is concluding that M really secures her position and that of MI6. For as Bond prepares to save the day and stop Silva, she quotes Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem *Ulysses*:

*"We are not now that strength which in old days,  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are,  
we are  
One equal temper of heroic hearts  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will*

In short this poem embodies MI6's spirit and commitment to public duty in the 21st century. The organisation might not have the ability to move 'earth and heaven' - start wars with countries and retaliate so easily on enemies who hide in the shadows - but MI6's strength is in not giving up, no matter how challenging the circumstances or the enemy. And of course we see this play out in that very room when, as soon as she finishes her speech, Silva storms in with a gun.

### Mise-en-scène: London

No article on *Skyfall*, indeed no article on any James Bond film, can conclude without an analysis of London itself, for the character of James Bond and MI6 are both inextricably linked to the city.

One of the key advantages for Bond and MI6 in setting the first part of the film in London is that they should be able to manipulate the city for their own advantages. However, since Silva is an ex-MI6 agent, this makes their knowledge almost redundant, as he knows just as much as Bond. This inevitably leads to a chase across the city between Bond and Silva. We see glimpses of Trafalgar Square on a sunny day with Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament in the background before Silva makes for the tube. Here we also see shots of Embankment station and Silva is able to make use of the tunnels and service hatchways, including Grays Road, a disused station, to get to the inquiry. When he surfaces it is broad daylight and we see commuters and stunned onlookers as he makes off in a stolen police car. As Bond runs after Silva he exits at the wrong station,

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Westminster. As a result, we see him, not Silva, running past all the major landmarks of the city: The Cenotaph, Westminster Abbey and Big Ben. In many ways this positions Bond as an integral part of the British establishment in the narrative. If Silva attacks the city then he attacks Bond, and vice versa.

London also opens and closes the film. After the initial prologue in which Bond is apparently killed off the film re-opens with an establishing shot of MI6 headquarters at night. Unlike later parts of the film it is raining heavily and inside we see a seemingly tortured M, alone and lit by only one desk lamp, writing Bond's obituary. Though her situation is troubling, MI6 and the city of London is seen as homely and when, in the morning, we then cut to another establishing shot of Parliament Square and see M's car driving through the various landmarks, she seems calm, almost comforted by the city.

The establishing shot of the last major sequence of the film is also full of British symbolism. The roof terrace where Bond and Miss Moneypenny converse is positioned

perfectly so that we can see Big Ben and Parliament Square, and there are at least three union jacks flying from the various buildings, including one above M16. As the camera pans down we see Bond dwarfing all of this once again, emphasising his relationship with the city and his country. As Miss Moneypenny brings him what M has bequeathed him - the bulldog ornament, a motif for duty and public service - we see more of the city, the Gherkin, the banking sector and Blackfriars Bridge. As she hands over the black box, a two-shot frames Bond and Moneypenny in between a British flag, suggesting that Moneypenny has been forgiven for her earlier wavering over her duty.

In short, both narratively and aesthetically Skyfall is a film full of symbolism and inexorably intertwined with British national identity.



## Key Terms

- ⇒ **Box office**—the financial success or failure of a movie measured by the total value of ticket sales
- ⇒ **Auteur**— A filmmaker whose individual style and complete control over all elements of production give a film its personal and unique stamp
- ⇒ **Blockbuster**—Any film that takes over 100 million dollars at the American box office. Usually created with both huge production and marketing budgets.
- ⇒ **Integrated studio system**—the system of organisation where studios controlled production, distribution and exhibition. This enabled the studio to apply assembly-line manufacturing and cost control methods to film production.
- ⇒ **Globalised conglomerate**—A large business made up of many smaller businesses and brands that are large enough to trade on a worldwide basis.
- ⇒ **Pre-sold property**—A basis for a film that the producers have paid exclusivity to use. Pre-sold as it comes with its own audience. For example, the Harry Potter books film rights were sold to Warner Brothers and had sold millions of copies before the movie were made.
- ⇒ **Cold War**—The non-violent conflict between the US and the former USSR after 1945 that would last until 1990.
- ⇒ **Vertical integration**—The ownership of the chain of production by one business. In the case of filmmaking this involved the studios producing, distributing and exhibiting their films.
- ⇒ **Brand recognition**—How easily a consumer can correctly identify a particular product or service just by viewing the product's or service's logo tagline, packaging or advertising campaign. How famous a business is.
- ⇒ **Hollywood ten**—of the 41 screenwriters, directors and producers called to testify by the US government about Communists working in Hollywood, ten refused to cooperate. They were 'blacklisted' by Hollywood and not allowed to work in movies due to their stand on free speech.
- ⇒ **Multiplex**—A cinema with several separate screens.
- ⇒ **Superpower**—A country with a dominant position in international relations that as the power to exert influence on a global scale. This is done through the combined means of technological, cultural, military (conventional and nuclear) and economic strength, as well as diplomatic influence.



## Camera Shots and Angles

**Eye level shot** - There are as many camera angles as there are shots, but in general they can be classified in three ways, eye level, high angle, and low angle.

Eye level shots put the viewer on an equal status with the subject.

**High angle shot** - The high angle shot looks down on the subject. As the words imply, it puts the viewer in a superior position to the subject, or conversely, it makes the subject appear weak or inferior.

**Low angle shot** - The low angle shot, in contrast, looks up at the subject. This gives the subject the appearance of strength or power.

**Over the shoulder shot**- The over the shoulder shot is used for longer conversations, and establishes near eye contact between the subject and the viewer, over the shoulder of another subject.

**Extreme Close-up (ECU)** - An Extreme Close-Up, sometimes called a "tight close-up," might perhaps frame only a part of a human face (an eye or the mouth), or perhaps a hand or foot. Extreme Close-Ups can in fact frame anything very small. This is a common shot found in video demonstrations of intricate procedures (e.g. dissections, drawings, etc.)

**Close-up (CU)** - This camera shot, sometimes called a head shot," usually frames an object about the size of a human head usually not including shoulders

**Medium Close-up (MCU)** - This camera shot indicates a space equivalent to a person's head and their shoulders

**Medium Shot (MS)** - This shot includes space which would frame a person's head and torso. This shot can also encompass two people standing next to each other filmed from the waist up. Two people sitting at a desk, such as can be seen in television newscasts, represents an example of a Medium Shot.

**Medium Long Shot (MLS)** - A Medium Long Shot can frame one or two people standing up, that is, their entire body

**Long Shot (LS)** - A Long Shot will be able to take in an entire room or large group of people. When the camera pulls back at the end of a newscast to allow you to see the entire set (cameras, desks, cables, lights, etc.) they are using a long shot

**Extreme Long Shot (ELS)** - An extremely long shot might encompass a picture of an entire house or, in fact, anything large. An extreme example can be found in the opening shot of "The Sound of Music." Here the camera actually frames several mountains, and then zooms in until we see Julie Andrews singing and smiling.

## Editing Terminology

**Straight Cuts** = increase the pace of a scene. The most obvious example being an action sequence. It could also occur in a dialogue sequence when two people are yelling at each other so you cut back and forth between them faster, often overlapping dialogue, in order to increase the tension/emotions between them.

**Fade Out** = an image is made to disappear gradually or the sound volume is gradually decreased to zero.

**Fade In** = a gradual increase in a motion-picture or television image's visibility at the beginning of a sequence.

**Dissolve** = is a gradual transition from one image to another

**Wipe** = A **wipe** is a type of **film** transition where one shot replaces another by travelling from one side of the frame to another or with a special shape.

**Jump cuts** = are when the editor disrupts the continuity of an action. For example the action of someone throwing a baseball after picking it up off the ground.

The person bends over and picks up the ball. Instead of watching them come back up from the ground, it cuts from their hand on the ball on the ground immediately to them throwing the ball.

**Cross cutting** = is when a film is edited to show two lines of action occurring at the same time

## Glossary of Film Terminology

**Aesthetics** = The specific 'look' of the film. The film's style.

**Auteur** = From the French 'author'. A director who has control over the style of the film.

**Cinematography** = Aspects of camera angles, distance and movement.

**Context** = When, where, how, and why the film is set. Time, place and circumstances.

**Conventions** = Methods, ingredients, things necessary for the style/category of film.

**Diegetic Sound** = Sound that is part of the film world (car horns beeping, birds singing)

**Non-diegetic Sound** = Sound added in post-production to create a certain atmosphere.

**Genre** = The style or category of the film.

**Iconography** = The images or symbols associated with a certain subject.

**Indie/independent** = Film that is independent of the constraints of mainstream Hollywood. These films are often characterised by low budgets, location settings (rather than studio), (often) inexperienced directors and fairly unknown casts.

**Key lighting (high and low)** = Lighting design to create different light/dark ratios. High-key lighting is bright and produces little shadow, whereas low-key lighting is used to specifically create shadow and contrast.

**Mainstream** = Popular, conventional, and/or part of a major film studio system.

**Mise-en-scène** = Literally, 'what is in the frame': setting, costume & props, colour, lighting, body language, positioning within the frame all come together to create meaning.

**Motif** = A dominant theme or recurring idea.

**Plot** = Different to story, plot is the narrative order that the story is told in.

**Representation** = The way that people, places and events are constructed.

**Screenplay** = Written by the screen writer, this document tells the story and will contain no camera direction.

**Story** = The ideas & events of the narrative whole.

**Shooting script** = Written by the director & cinematographer (not the screen writer), this script focuses on planning the camera shots & other practical elements that will bring the screenplay to life.

**Spectator** = An individual member of the audience.

## Sound Terminology

**Diegetic sound** = Sound that is part of the film world.

**Non-diegetic sound** = Sound that is added into the film in post production.

**Contrapuntal sound** = Sounds and music that contrast with the images on the screen.

**Pleonastic sound** = Sound that is heightened or exaggerated for effect.

**Sound bridge** = Sound that carries from one scene to the next.

**Ambient Sound** = Background sound.

**Voiceover** = Characters or narrator speaking over other images on screen.

**Dialogue** = Speech by the characters.

## Homework for weeks 1 and 2: Revision Due =

1. **Revise the plot summary of Skyfall ready for a recall quiz in lesson.**

## Homework for weeks 3 and 4: Revision Due =

1. **Revise the following ready for a recall quiz in lesson.**

Key terms

Camera Shots + Angles

Editing Terminology

Film Glossary

Sound terminology

## Homework for weeks 5 and 6: Micro Analysis Due =

1. **Micro analyse the following stills from the film.**

**First make notes on cinematography and mise-en-scene before writing your analysis.**



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## Wider Reading List

- WJEC Eduqas GCSE Film Studies (Text Book) - [https://www.amazon.co.uk/WJEC-Eduqas-GCSE-Film-Studies/dp/1911208020/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1531228817&sr=8-1&keywords=eduqas+film+studies+textbook](https://www.amazon.co.uk/WJEC-Eduqas-GCSE-Film-Studies/dp/1911208020/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1531228817&sr=8-1&keywords=eduqas+film+studies+textbook)
- BBC Bitesize section on film—<https://www.bbc.com/education/guides/z9hrwxs/revision/1>
- Link to the specification we use—<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies/gcse/>

**Skyfall Script** = <https://www.scriptslug.com/assets/uploads/scripts/skyfall-2012.pdf>

**Ian Fleming James Bond Books**

### 1. Casino Royale

*Le Chiffre is a businessman with expensive tastes – and SMERSH's chief operative in France. As his dissolute lifestyle threatens to ruin him, his only hope of survival is to risk his paymasters' money at the baccarat table. Across from him sits James Bond, the finest gambler in the British secret service. Bond's mission: to outplay Le Chiffre and shatter his Soviet cell.*

*Amidst the opulence of the Royale-les-Eaux casino, the two men face each other in a game with the highest stakes of all.*

### 2. Live and Let Die

*James Bond's new assignment will take him to the heart of the occult: to infiltrate this secret world and destroy Mr Big's global network.*

*From Harlem's throbbing jazz joints to the shark-infested waters of Jamaica, enemy eyes watch Bond's every move. He must tread carefully to avoid a nightmarish fate.*

