

# What a director of photography does

In the **hierarchy** of a film set, the director's two key creative people in the crew are the **art director** and the **cinematographer**, also called **director of photography** (DP). The art director is in charge of the art department and the cinematographer is in charge of the camera, electric and **grip departments**. The camera department maintains the camera and has it ready for the shot while the grips and electricians **handle** the **lighting**. Electricians set the lights and run power to them. **Grips** also provide support to the camera department when there is camera movement for the scene. An example of this is a **dolly shot**.

The director of photography is one of the most important people to be **hired** for a film. The visual look of your film is heavily dependent on who you hire. If you ever find yourself in a hiring position, then make sure that your potential DP has a **reel** for you to see. You want to be absolutely sure that you are hiring the right person.

The cinematography in any movie should **enhance** the sense of the movie along with the feel which the characters are able to produce on screen. The same applies to photography. Here is a list of a few films with very good cinematography.

## **Barry Lyndon** (1975)

A war drama. Cinematography by John Alcott. An Irish Drama set in mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century, great battle sequences and pleasing countryside. There were no sets involved, all was shot on location and no diffusion at all used for any of the landscape shots. The candlelight scenes were shot using Zeiss 50mm f/0.7 made by NASA.



## **Amelie** (2001)

A romantic comedy. Cinematography by Bruno Delbonnel. Story of a **shy** waitress, who tries to change the lives of others, which in turn helps her to discover love.

*"I love to play with scarce but **harsh** light, great translucent color quality."* - Bruno Delbonnel

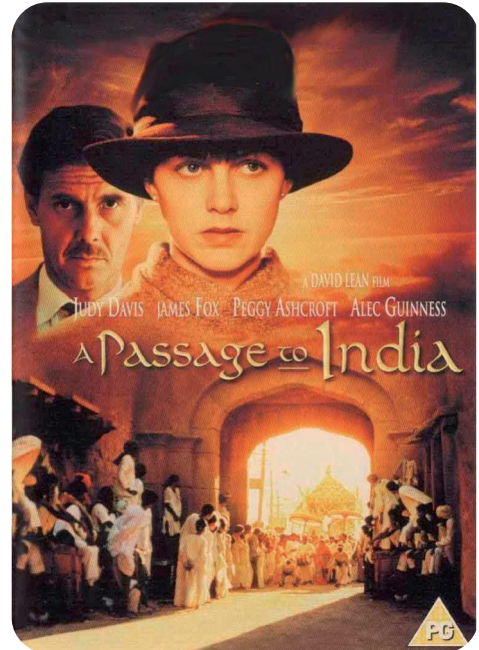
**dolly shot:** *carrellata*  
**evidence:** *prova*  
**grip:** *macchinista*  
**gripping department:** *reparto di attrezzistica*  
**to handle:** *gestire*  
**harsh:** *forte (qui)*  
**hierarchy:** *gerarchia*  
**to hire:** *assumere*  
**lighting:** *luci*  
**reel:** *bobina, 'pizza'*  
**to shoot (shot-shot):** *(qui) filmare*



***A Passage to India* (1984)**

A travel drama. Cinematography by Ernest Day. Story set during the British rule in India, when a couple from England visit rural India.

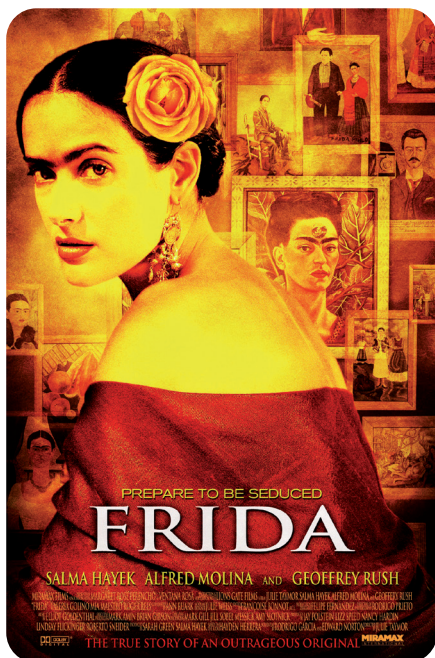
Ernest Day's photography exposes the warm colors of a natural India. The film is directed by David Lean. He wrote his own screenplay and makes India look like an amazing, beautiful place that an Englishman can never quite put his finger on. David Lean has made a great screen adaptation of E.M. Forster's complex novel about racial prejudice and sexual repression. Lean structures the film around two women. The central part of the drama is an excursion trip the two British women take with the Moslem doctor Aziz to the ancient and mysterious Marabar Caves, and Adela's later testimony that she had been **raped** there (though there is no clear **evidence** to what exactly had happened). Initial friendship and **open-mindedness** turn into animosity, culture-collision and **ultimately** tragedy.

***Titanic* (1997)**

A romantic drama. Cinematography by Russel Carpenter. A love story between Jack and Rose on the maiden voyage of the ship.

Russell Carpenter won many awards for Best Cinematography with his **stunning** work on *Titanic*, directed by James Cameron. Carpenter joined the production at the Fox Studios Baja complex in Rosarito, Mexico, where all of the period and ship sequences would be **shot**. Aided by camera operator Jimmy Muro, Cameron applied his trademark kinetic, decidedly modern visual style to *Titanic*'s predominately Edwardian-era setting. "There are actually two very different photographic styles within the period section. In the first part, the camerawork is rather polite, graceful and even eloquent. I was trying to reinforce the opulence and beauty of the time with the lighting."

**to enhance:** *umentare*  
**open-mindedness:** *larghezza di vedute*  
**to rape:** *violentare*  
**stunning:** *sbalorditivo*  
**ultimately:** *in fine*



### *Frida* (2002)

A biography drama. Cinematography by Rodrigo Prieto.

A biography depicting the private life of Mexican surrealist painter Frida Kahlo. *Frida's* visuals centered on the importance of **bold** colors and **crisp** definition. "If you look at photos of Mexico in Frida's period – before all the smog – there's clarity and a rich, deep contrast of color." Prieto says he found that aspect of the film especially **appealing**: "Frida loved pre-Hispanic art, and the way she lived and dressed was very vibrantly Mexican. You don't often see that represented in movies. We wanted to see Frida's world through her eyes, while still staying true to realistic **settings** and lighting designs. We took a lot of visual **cues** from her own letters and diaries; she wrote a lot about color and the 'mystery of darkness.'" Zeiss Ultra Prime lenses were **integral** to **achieving** the clarity and color of Frida's **palette**. "The Ultra Primes offer a great reproduction of contrast and definition in the shadow areas without being too hard", explains Prieto, who mounted the lenses on a Moviecam Compact. "I didn't see Frida as very filtered; I wanted high saturation of color and good contrast, and I knew the Ultra Primes would be very good for that."

### *Schindler's List* (1993)

A war drama directed by Steven Spielberg. Cinematography by Janusz Kaminski. Biography of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman; contains great pre / post WWII scenes. The film was shot in black and white.

"I wanted to give a **timeless** feel to it, so the viewer wouldn't be **aware** when it was shot." - Janusz Kaminski



**to achieve:** *conseguire, raggiungere*  
**appealing:** *attraente*  
**aware:** *consapevole, conscio*  
**bold:** *(qui) vivace*  
**crisp:** *(qui) netta*  
**cue:** *spunto, suggerimento*  
**integral:** *(qui) indispensabile*  
**palette:** *tavolozza*  
**setting:** *ambientazione*  
**timeless:** *senza tempo*

1



In your own words, describe the photographs taken from the films listed above.

2



With the help of your teacher, identify the English writers from whose novels two of the films listed above are taken. Then do some research about them on the web.