

Understandings

- Many forms of media (plural of medium) have the potential to capture the audience's attention and want to see “what happens next”.
- The ability to do this often leads to a successful product outcome.
- The ability to do this is based on a number of specific elements and some less definable elements.

The specific elements in the films of Hitchcock are:

- Camera work

Of all the technical elements of suspense, it's the camera (both in framing and movement) that Hitchcock innovated with, excelled in, and frightened his audiences with.

- Plot conventions

The knowledge gap: Who knows more, the audience or the characters? Is the audience aware of danger that the character is not? Or are they along for the ride. Hitchcock (through his writers, whom he basically controlled) plays with both of these to great effect.

- Characterization/Identification

This element is created through a variety of techniques, including plot conventions and camera work. How the audience and other characters see a character, and how that changes over the course of the film, helps to build suspense. Who do we identify with and how does that make us feel when that character is put in a difficult situation?

- Editing

The pace of editing often speeds up as tension builds. Editing style, which we will see varying examples of, also has a profound effect on mood.

- Sound design

Both *diagetic* and *non-diagetic* sound help to build tension.

- Symbolism and Hitchcockian “Cues”

Hitchcock made conscious use of symbols and the study of psychology to affect his audiences.

- Other

What do you think? The study of film is not fixed, it is fluid; it is based on inquiry, reflection, and discourse. I look forward to hearing your own ideas about what elements make a Hitchcock film suspenseful.