LEVEL 3 I UNIT 2

SPECIAL EFFECTS IN MOVIES

Reading 1

SKILLS:

- Details
- Make inferences
- Understand function
- Understand synonyms
- Understand negative facts
- Insert sentences into a passage

GETTING STARTED:

Do you prefer realistic or fantastic movies?

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPECIAL EFFECTS AND VFX? IS THERE A SUPERIOR CHOICE?

There is often some confusion about the terms special effects and visual effects, which might appear to be the same. However, this is not true. Each one refers to a variety of aspects of modern-day film and television production.

The difference lies in their function during the production process. Special Effects (SFX) refers to on-set visual effects techniques. On-set special effects might include adding various elements that the story requires into scenes such as fire, water, and snow. Before the **advent** of digital technologies, the only way to add elements to scenes was by using Special Effects filmed on-set practically. SFX also includes skills like animatronics, like Yoda from Star Wars, for example. Besides, SFX includes prosthetic make-up and the building and filming of miniatures. Again, the earlier Star Wars films used many miniature models to film spaceships and planets.

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Video Effects (VFX) enable filmmakers to achieve the same effects as on-set SFX during post-production. They can integrate elements such as explosions or digitally re-create anything done via SFX. VFX includes all forms of digital enhancement of shots like added backgrounds using green screens or integrating CGI models and creatures.

Both SFX and VFX are methods of enabling directors to enhance their story. Most likely, a production will need one or both tools. **[5A]** Special effects have their origin at a simpler time in media production. SFX are used to enhance a scene. **[5B]** An explosion or a crash, a rainy moment in a love story, situations that might happen spontaneously in life but require planning on set. [5C] Common examples of on-set SFX might be snowmaking, rainmaking, or the adding of smoke to create atmosphere. **[5D]** While you can accomplish these effects using VFX, it is usually preferable to capture things on camera if you can as SFX look more real. If you can create these on set and film them, they are **likely** to work more effectively than creating the post-production effects.

So, if SFX captured on camera are so effective, when do you need to use VFX? One situation might be if you have a bigger image to cover and more shots to capture. If you want to create a snowy landscape with wide shots, it will be easier and cheaper to do this using VFX. Another common situation is when fantastic or unusual worlds are created. Designing an environment not likely to be found easily could imply so much more money if the director pretends to use SFX. Then, you must consider on-set conditions. If you are adding smoke to help enhance a sequence, for example in a battle sequence, the wind may blow away your smoke or it may not behave as you wish. This is when you will need VFX smoke. SFX created on-set can't be directed to behave as the director and production team want.

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In conclusion, VFX elements can accomplish much of the same effect as SFX without implying health or safety risks, and they can be a cheaper option. VFX elements allow you to be more creative in your direction and afford you more flexibility in your production. **Though**, as said above, some see VFX as less real and prefer the tactile nature of practical effects, which can be achieved by using SFX.

**Adapted from https://www.realtimeuk.com/blog/special-effects-vs-visual-effects/*

Glossary:

- CGI: Computer-generated imagery (CGI) is the application of computer graphics to create or contribute to images in art, printed media, video games, films, television programs, shorts, commercials, videos, and simulators.

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Answer the following questions:

1. What is stated about SFX and VFX in paragraph 1?

a. SFX are confusing.
b. VFX are less modern.
c. SFX and VFX refer to the same concept.
d. SFX and VFX have to do with different aspects.

2. According to paragraph 2, what is NOT true about SFX? Choose two answers

a. They add elements that aren't present in the scene.
b. They are used at the moment of filming.
c. They started with the movie Star Wars.
d. They are used after a scene has been shot.

3. Which is NOT a synonym for advent in paragraph 2?

a. Appearance
b. Benefit
c. Arrival
d. Beginning

4. What is stated about VFX in paragraph 3?

a. They reproduce aspects that are not available during a scene.
b. They are also called green screens.
c. They are not as good as SFX.
d. They incorporate explosions during an action scene.

5. Look at the squares [ ] in paragraph 4. Choose the square where you can insert this sentence: So, the question is what is the right solution for a project?

a. 5A
b. 5B
c. 5C
d. 5D

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6. What is the function of the word likely in paragraph 4?

a. Express similarity
b. Express probability
c. Express comparison
d. Express hobbies

7. According to paragraph 5, which of the following descriptions represents a scene where VFX are more necessary than SFX?

a. A scene where some cowboys are shooting a sheriff and his officers in the desert.
b. A scene where a wedding takes place inside a very big room with plenty of people.
c. A scene where a boy inside a house notices some snow starts falling from the sky.
d. A scene where a knight is fighting a wizard and his dragons at a magical mountain.

8. What is the main topic developed in paragraph 6?

a. Synchronizing stunts and effects
b. Actors feeling sick while filming a scene
c. Creating a safe environment when using effects
d. The textures that can be created if SFX are incorporated

9. What is the function of the word though in the last paragraph?

a. Express reason
b. Express contrast
c. Express purpose
d. Express addition

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Think of a movie with great special effects. Which one is it? What kind of effects does it show? Is it a good movie?

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