

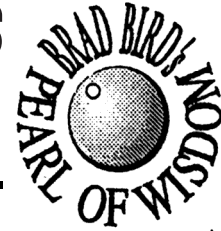
Brad Bird on how to Compose Shots

For Storyboard and Layout Artists

Part 1

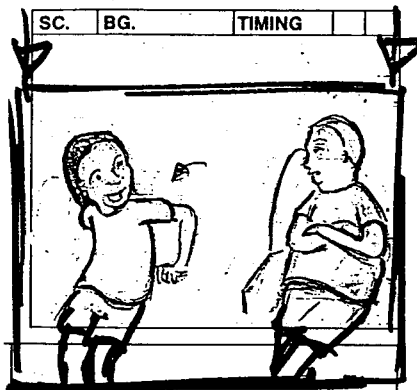
PDF provided by www.animationmeat.com

**Samples of Visual Consultant
Brad Bird's Composition Notes**



Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1

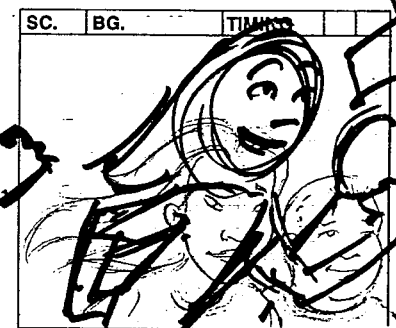
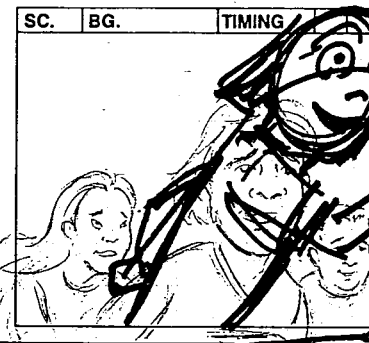


ADJUST DOWN
ON ACTION
(WHEN ACTION
MAKES THE

do something
COMPOSITION
SUDDENLY SUCK,
CORRECT FOR
IT!!)

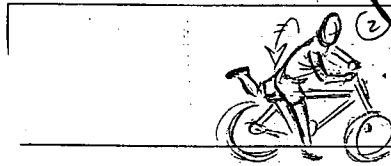
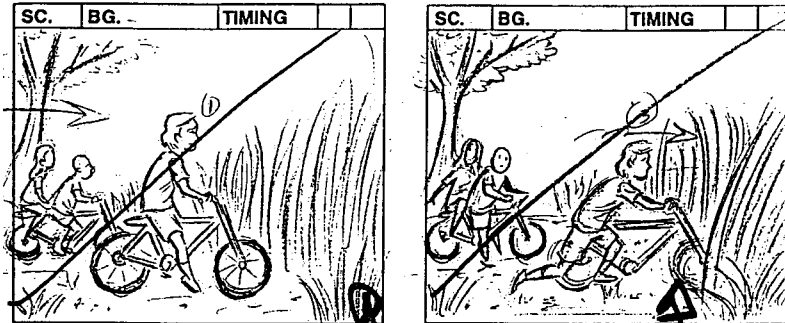


MAKE COMPOSITION
LESS FLAT



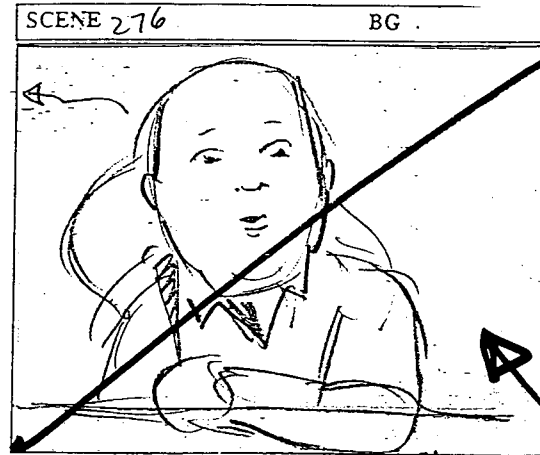
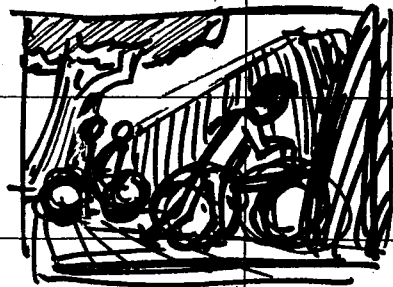
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



THIS
LIKE

THIS

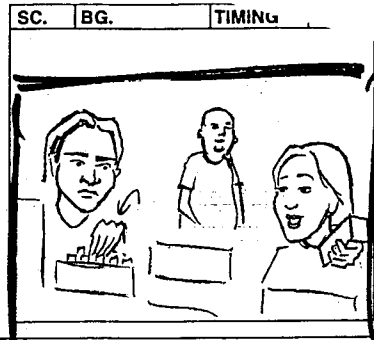


APPROX
SIGN - IN

THIS
LIKE
THIS

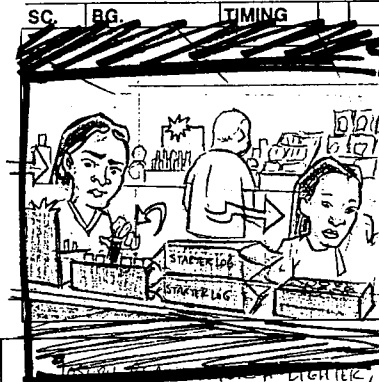
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



~~JOSEPH PICKS LIGHTER FROM~~
~~DISPLAY CONNIE LIFTS CANDLES~~

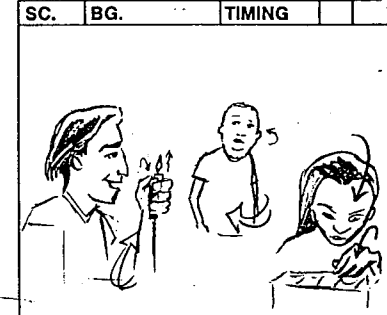
Connie picks up some scented candles.



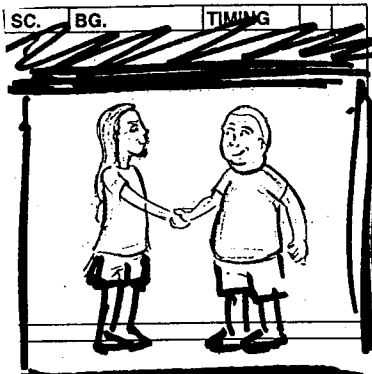
~~JOSEPH PICKS UP LIGHTER,~~
~~CONNIE WALKS FORWARD, STOPS AT~~
~~A DISPLAY, BOBBY LOOKS DOWN IN BG~~

INT. GET IN GET OUT MINI-MART - CONTINUOUS

Bobby, Connie and Joseph wander through the aisles.



JOSEPH PICKS THE LIGHTER ON
 CONNIE REACHES FOR CANDLES
 BOBBY TURNS TO JOSEPH



bobby



THIS LIKE
 THIS

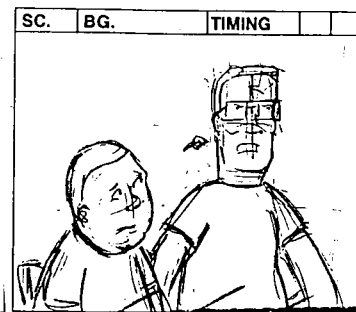
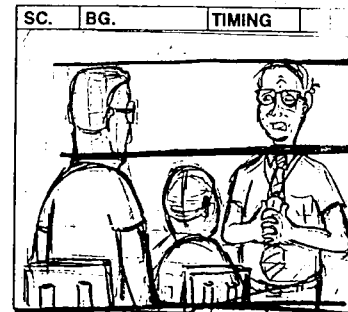
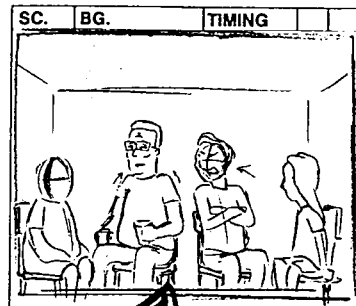
(JOSEPH COMES)

Let's get butane lighters.

CA' MON!

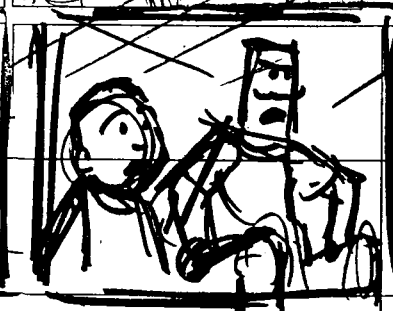
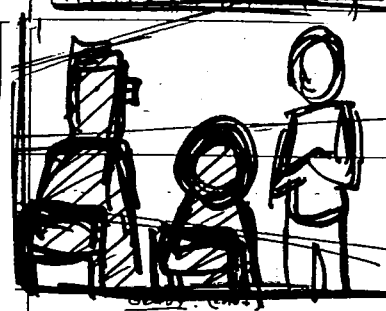
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



A

THIS
LIKE
THIS



LOWER
ANGLE

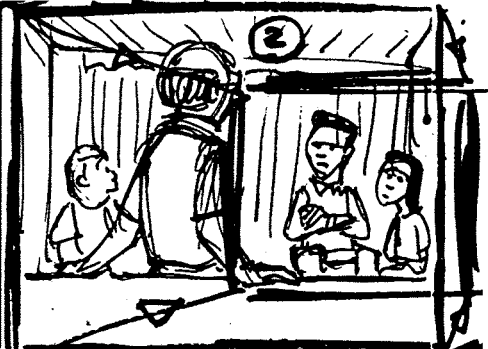
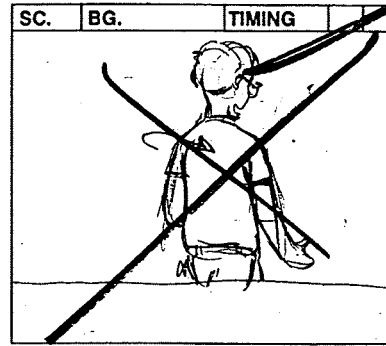
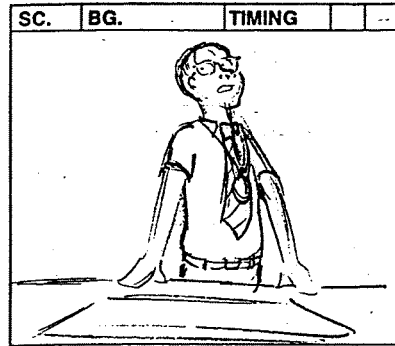
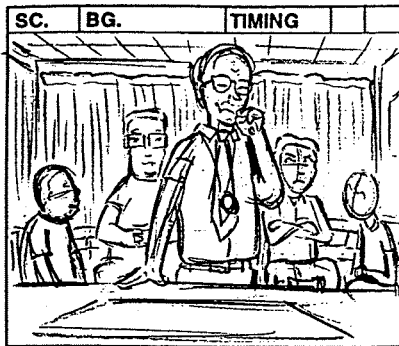
Use lower angles and remember to make sure characters aren't parallel to each other. Break things up!

We owe it to ourselves to find out why.

HANK
You're saying it's my fault I'm here instead of meeting my community's energy needs?

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



① GRANDY CLEARS THROAT.

GRANDY
(CLEARS THROAT) Gentlemen. Let's
try an "active listening" exercise.

Kahn,
I want you to tell Hank

OR?
THIS

GRANDY (CONT')

THEN GRANDY
LEANS BACK ON
DESK

GRANDY: (cont)

I want you to tell Hank

**SLIDE OUT
GRANDY + DESK
SLIGHTLY**

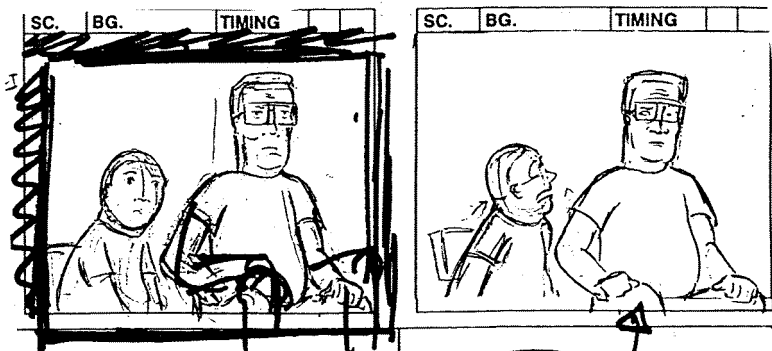
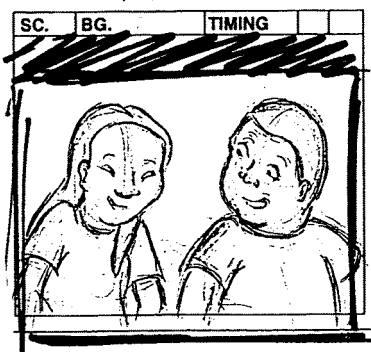
**(AT A DIAGONAL)
TO CLEAR THEM
FOR PUSH IN ON KAHN**

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



THIS
LIKE THIS

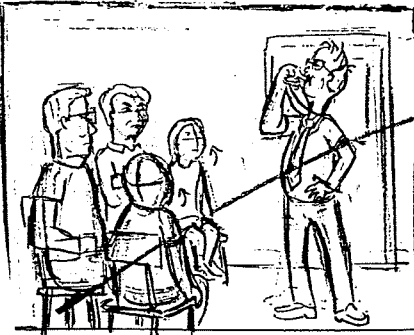


THIS
LIKE
THIS

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1

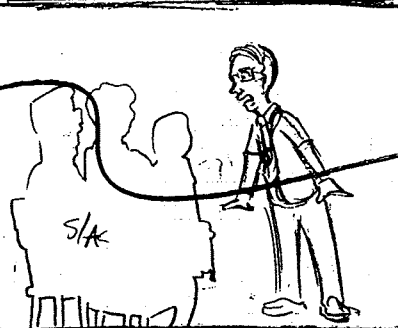
SC. BG. TIMING



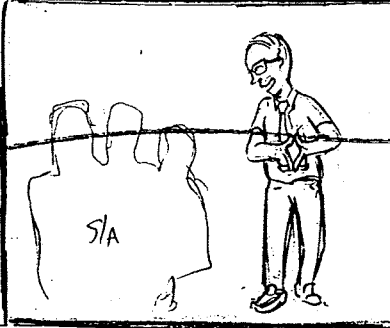
KIDS LOOK UP TO GRANDY
HOOK UP TO PREVIOUS SC.

Grandy blows his pitch pipe at the two men.

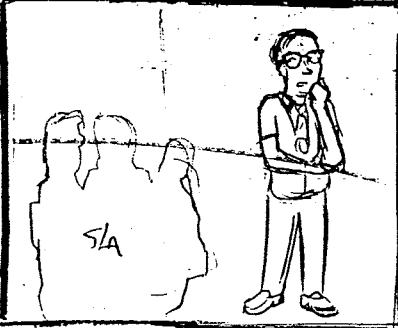
SC. BG. TIMING



SC. BG. TIMING



SC. BG. TIMING

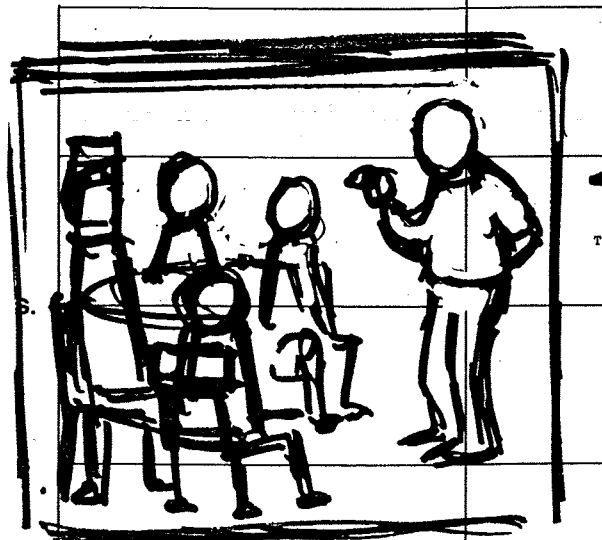


CLEAN UP COMPOSITION

LIKE THIS

GRANDY

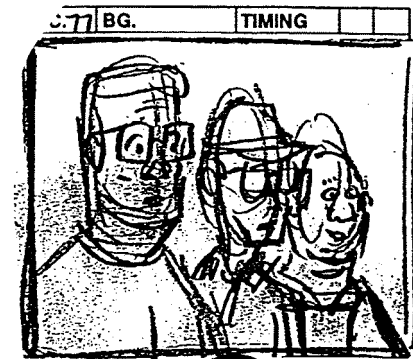
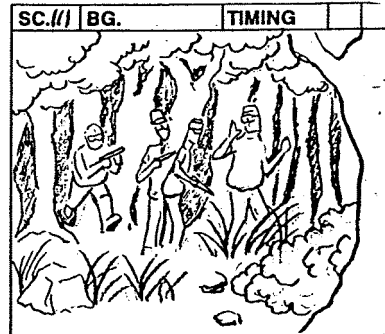
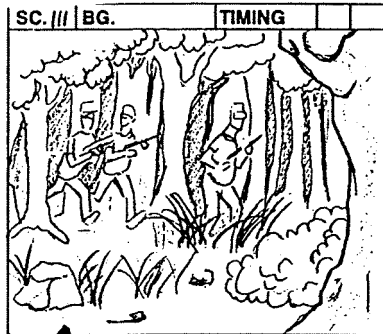
Time out.



Does your composition have a nice silhouette?
Make sure things read clearly.

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1



They've come to a little clearing in the trees. Hank holds up his hand for silence.

PAN INTO FROM LEFT...

THIS



THIS LIKE THIS



BILL
I can't afford not to.

HANK
Shhh! This is it, guys.

START → STOP

THIS IS SO THAT WOODS APPEAR DEEP, AND WE CAN FEEL CLEARING ETC.

SLIDE O.C. TREE @ FASTER RATE

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 1

Storyboard sketches illustrating composition and framing. The sketches are arranged in a grid with columns for scene numbers and background, and rows for timing and dialogue.

Sketch 1 (SC 18 BG): Shows a character in the background and a woman in the foreground. Annotations: "THIS LIKE THIS" (circled) with an arrow pointing to the woman's head position.

Sketch 2 (SC 19 BG): Shows a character sitting at a desk. Annotations: "SHOULD BE SUBTLE UP-SHOT" (circled) with an arrow pointing to the character's head position.

Sketch 3 (SC 20 BG): Shows a character sitting at a desk. Annotations: "THIS LIKE THIS" (circled) with an arrow pointing to the character's head position.

Sketch 4 (SC 66 BG): Shows two characters at a desk. Annotations: "FG. FIGURE HIGHER IN FRAME ETC." (circled) with an arrow pointing to the character's head position.

Sketch 5 (Bottom Left): Shows a character in a window. Annotations: "THIS LIKE THIS" (circled) with an arrow pointing to the character's head position.

Sketch 6 (Bottom Right): Shows two characters at a desk. Annotations: "THIS LIKE THIS" (circled) with an arrow pointing to the character's head position, and "PEGGY / LUANNE (GRUNTS AND NOISES)" below.

Dialogue:

LUANNE: Well, if you're so worried, come with me.

BUCKLEY: Oh, you mean it?

BUCKLEY: Buck Norris Ultimate... ng expertly REVEAL Peggy and jerking of the sting.

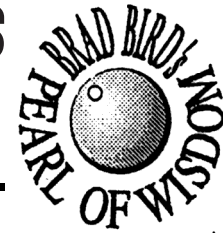
Brad Bird on how to Compose Shots

For Storyboard and Layout Artists

Part 2

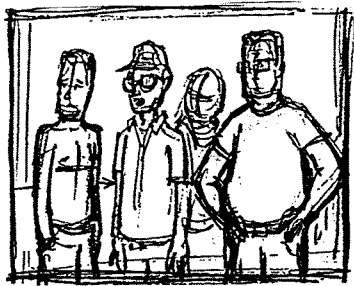
PDF provided by www.animationmeat.com

**Samples of Visual Consultant
Brad Bird's Composition Notes**



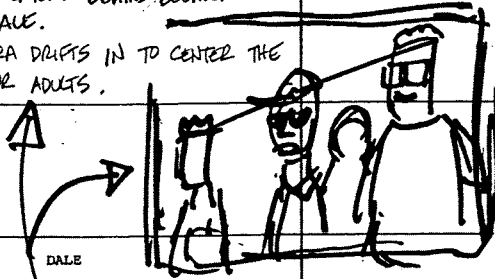
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2



BILL ENTERS BEHIND BOOMER & DALE.

CAMERA DRIFTS IN TO CENTER THE FOUR ADULTS.

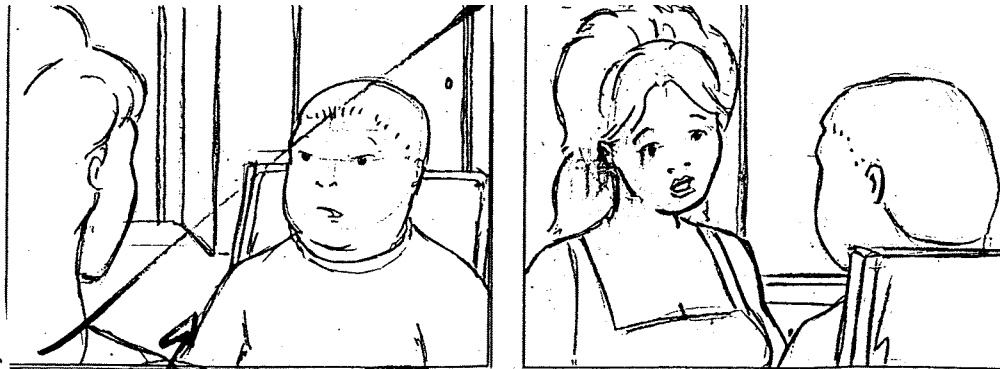


DALE

noise's been giving Nancy
aches all week.

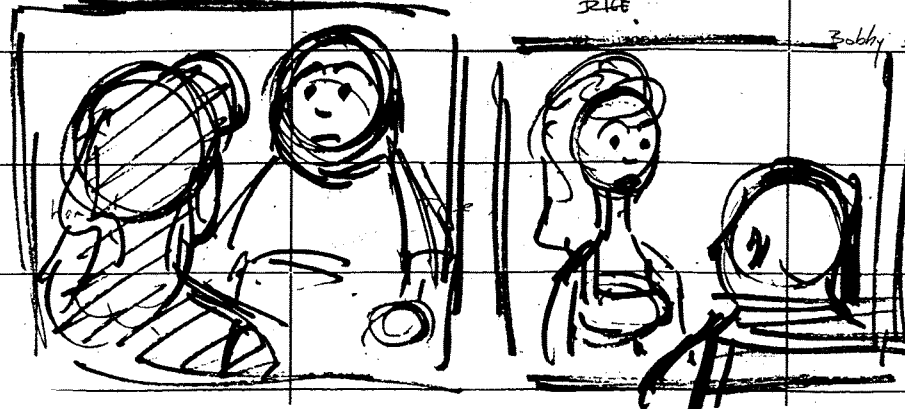
her back broke

**BREAK UP
COMPOSITION
MORE**



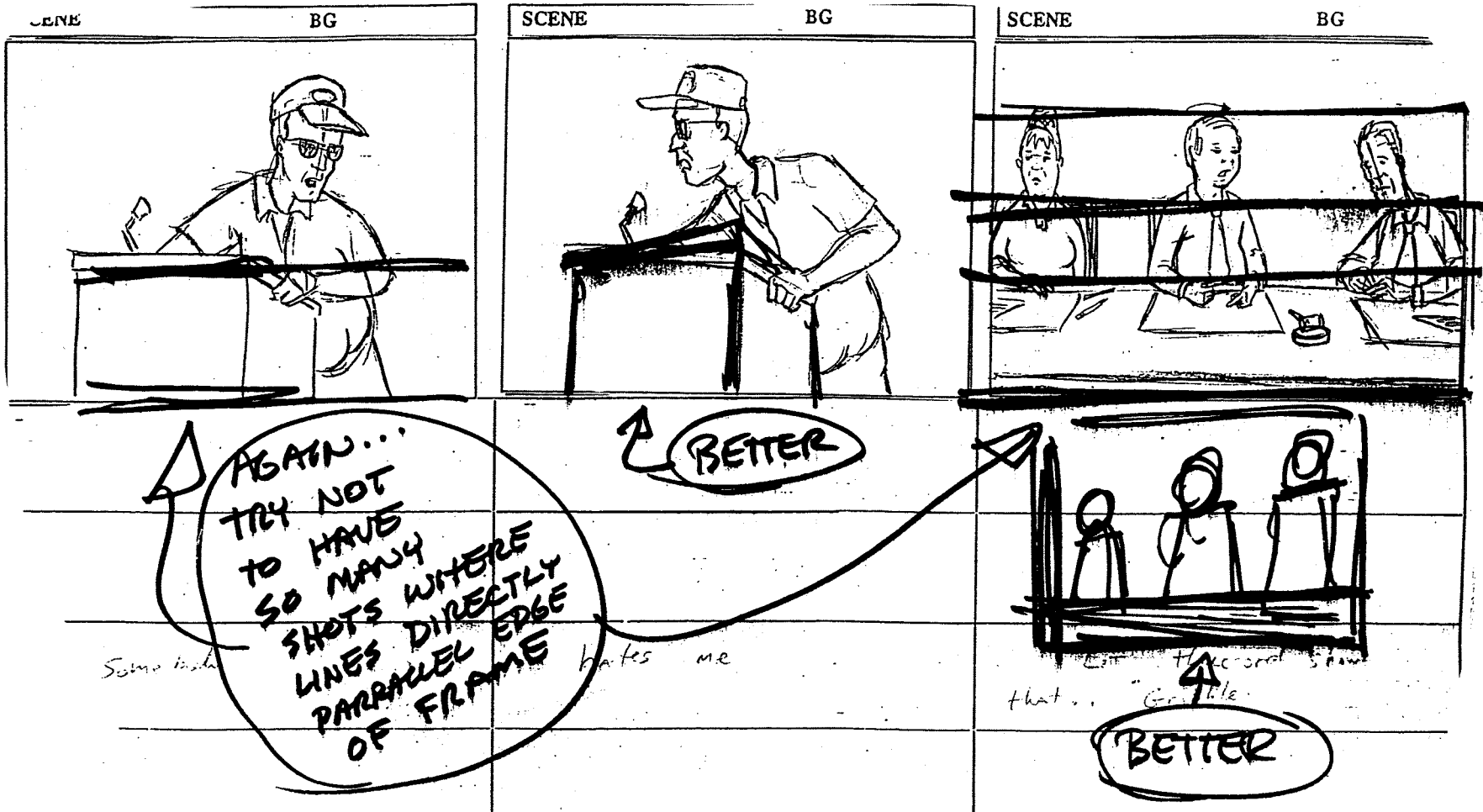
THIS LIKE THIS

OPEN UP A LITTLE - TOO CRAMPED
DICE



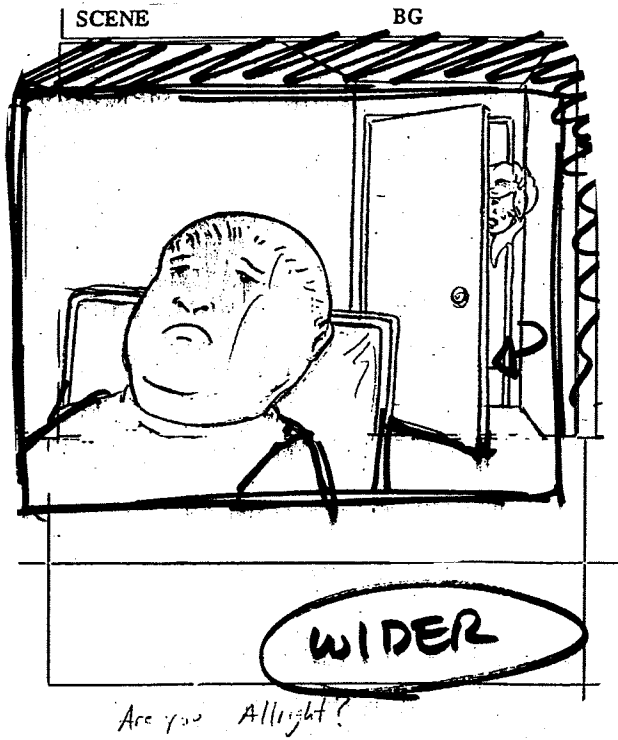
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2



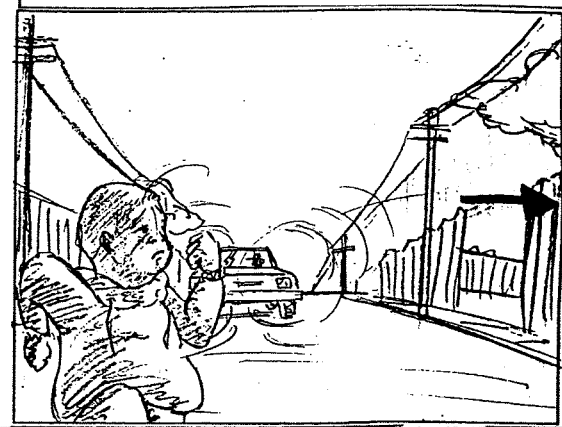
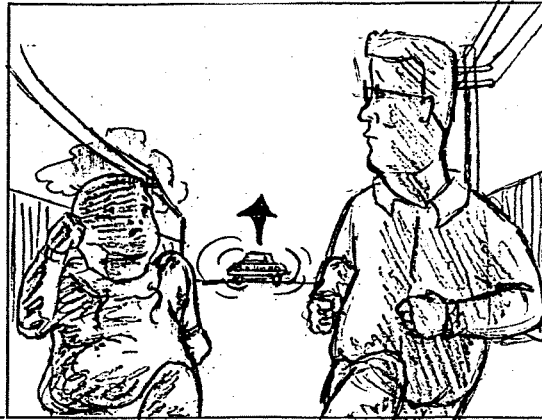
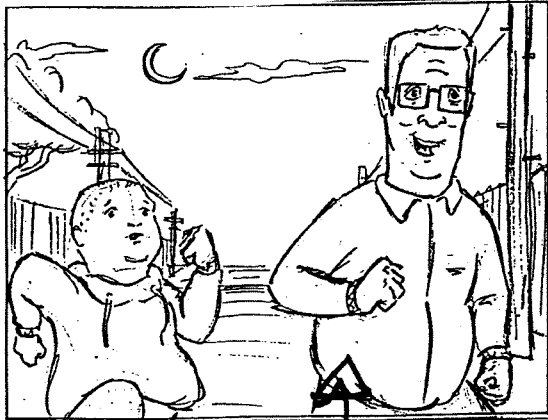
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2

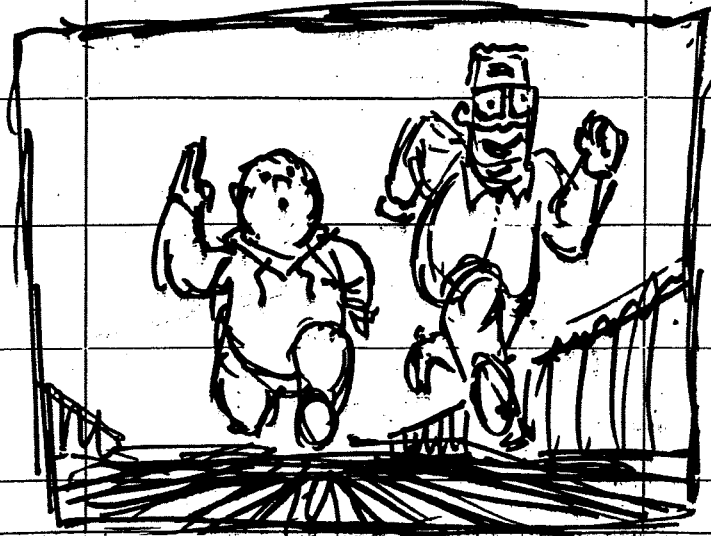


Brad Bird on Composition

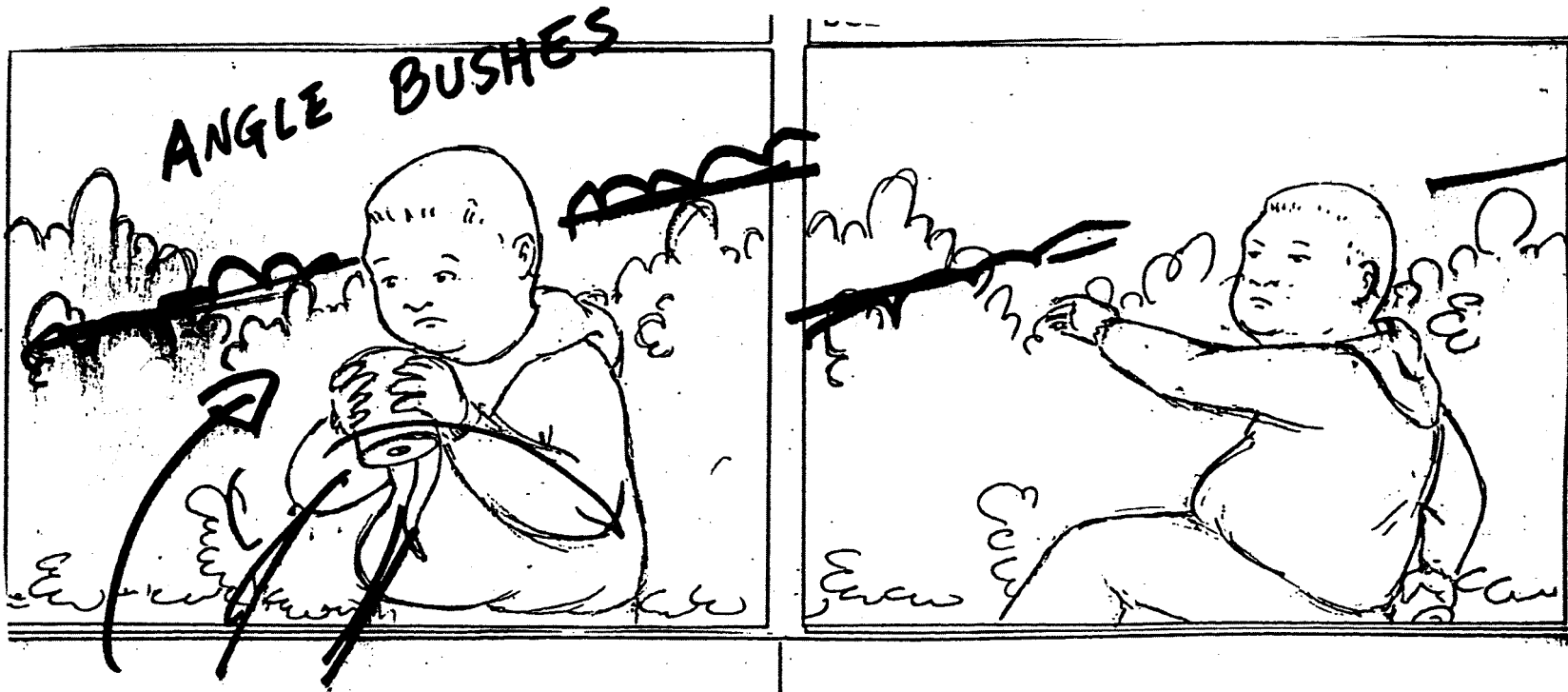
Part 2



Do THIS
LIKE THIS



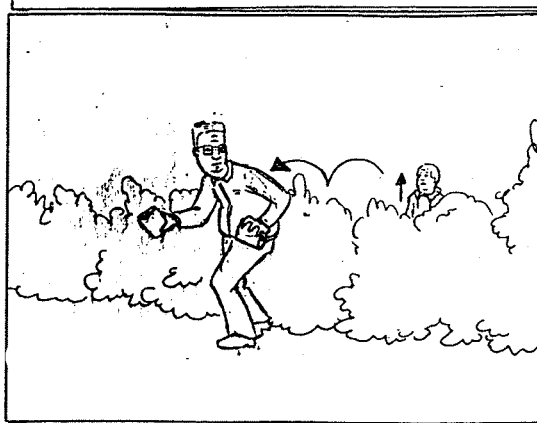
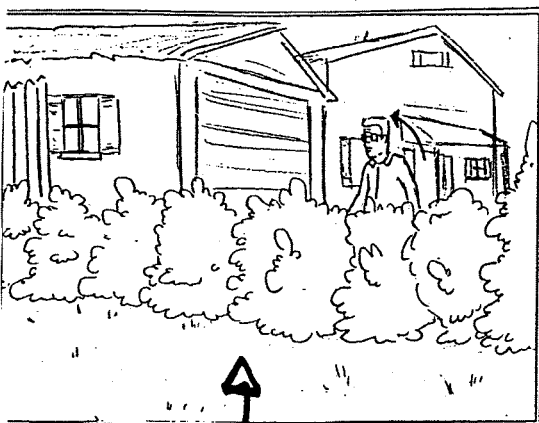
A FULL FIGURE,
LOWER ANGLE,
LESS CLUTTER...
(PHONE POLES ON BOTH
SIDES, ETC)



COMES UP INTO
SHOT W/ ROLL --

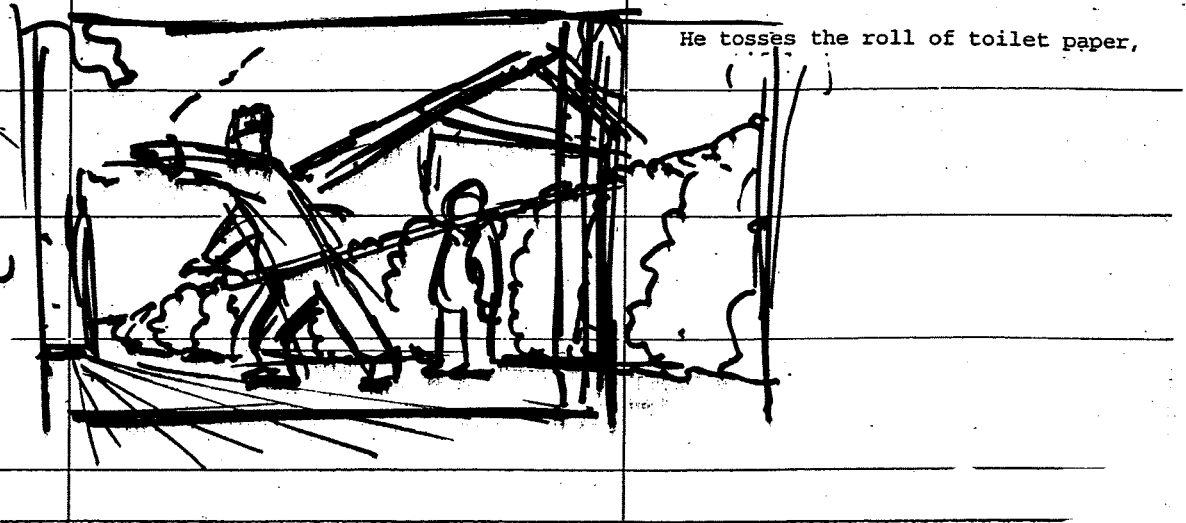
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2



↑
THIS
LIKE
THIS →

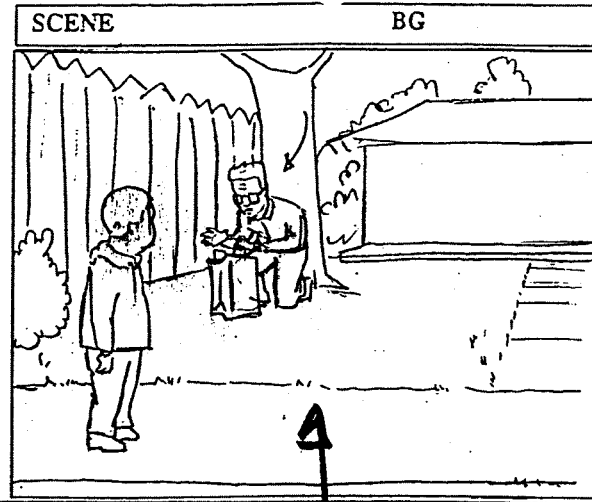
BREAK UP COMPOSITION
LOWER ANGLE
EMPHASIZES SKY, ETC



Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2

MAN INC. SHOW # 71901- 0006



Use perspective to your advantage. Try get some depth into your comps!

A lower horizon line really sets your characters into the composition.

THIS IS A REALLY WEAK COMPOSITION

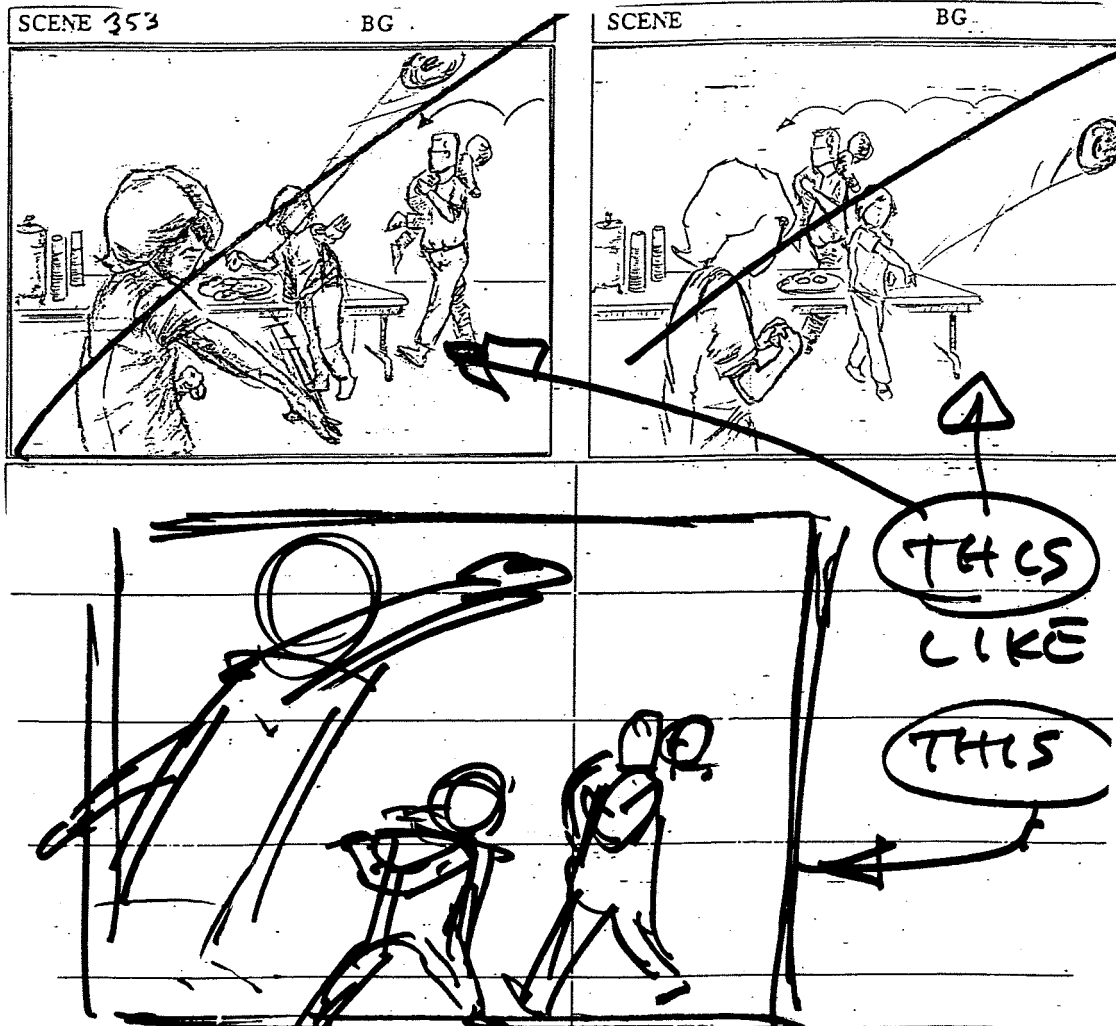


MORE LIKE THIS

Treats* are only half of trick or treat.

Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2



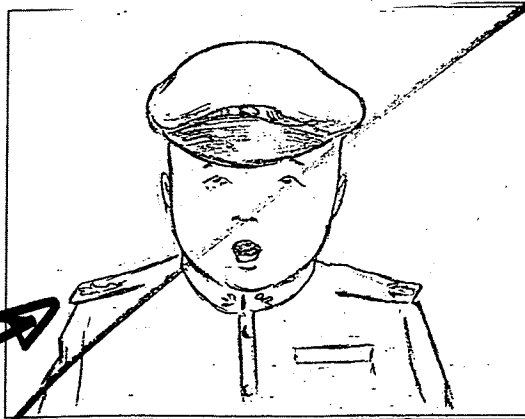
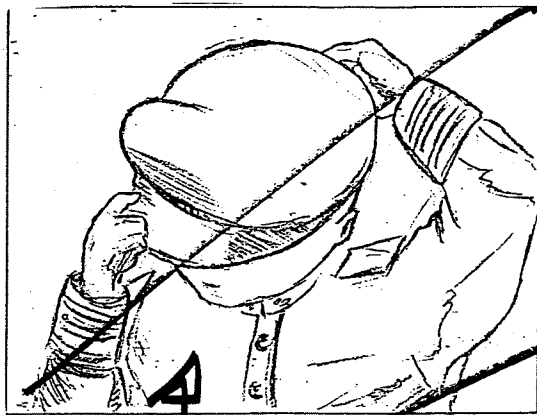
Once again, lowering the horizon really helps!

Try make your compositions more dynamic.

Be aware of how the eye flows around the comp, and what you want the eye drawn to.

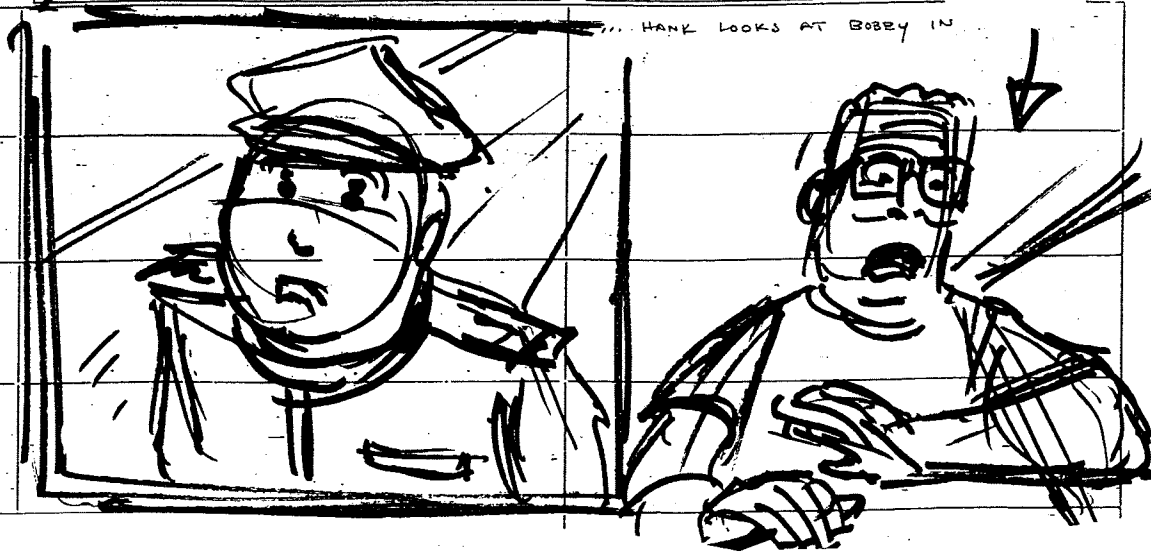
Brad Bird on Composition

Part 2



MORE OF AN UP SHOT

THIS LIKE THIS



HANK LOOKS AT BOBBY IN

STORYBOARDING

THE SIMPSONS

By Chris Roman

WAY



Contents:

Tooltime for Storyboarding

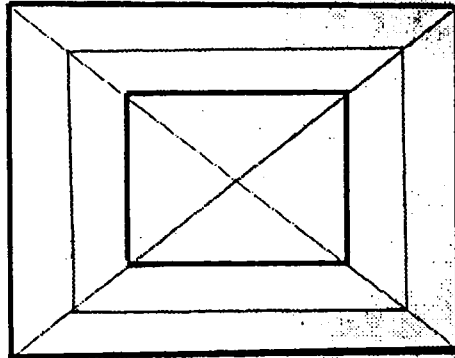
Showing Camera Moves

Angles are our Friends!

Lower the Horizon

Don't cut off Heads

TOOLTIME FOR STORYBOARDING

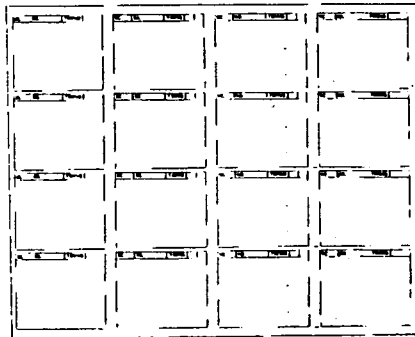
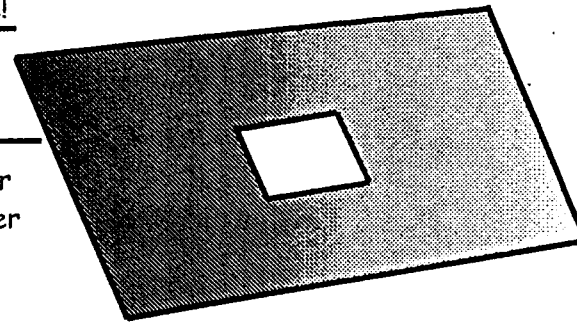


This 'grid' will save layout lots of trouble! When you do a TRUCK IN or TRUCK OUT, use the center square as a guide for HOW SMALL YOU CAN GO! For layout, a square 1/4 the size of a storyboard frame is equal to a 6 field on a 12 field grid. Any closer and they'll need to do a 'match-cut'; not taboo, but not easy to do.

So unless the scene really calls for it, try to avoid going in too close!

The MAGIC WINDOW of COMPOSITION

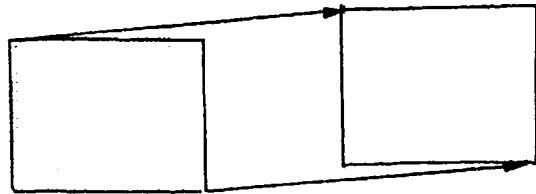
Take a piece of cardboard and cut a hole in the center the size of a storyboard frame. Place it over whatever drawing you're working on! Eliminates the unwanted white space around it and lets you focus on the panel, and FIX THAT COMPOSITION!



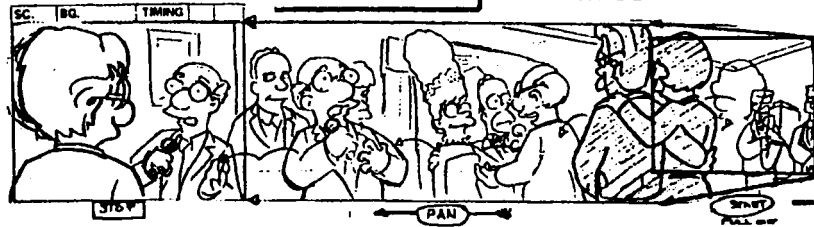
Doing roughs on a page with only four panels on it doesn't let you see enough of the whole story. By drawing on paper with 16 panels on it (keep the panels actual size, and you may be able to use your roughs for final!), you can be sure that the pacing is good, and that you're not using too many of the same shots!

Showing Camera Moves on a Simpsons Board

Remove all the top labels of the frames except the one on the stop point



PAN: Arrows from one frame to another...
the clearer the better!



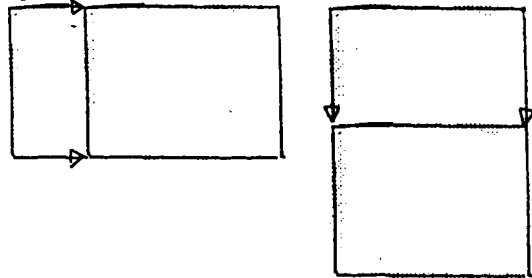
Show the direction of the pan

Show the start point

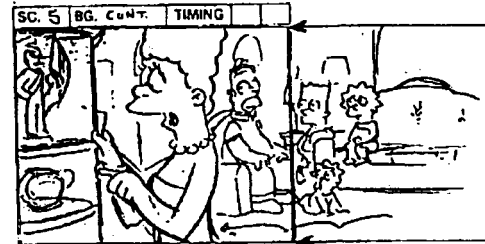
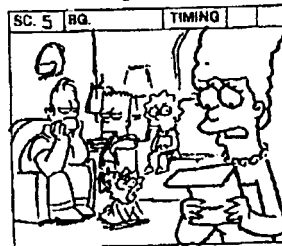
Show the stop point;

box it to clearly make it different from the start point

If the acting changes through the pan, show a few of the poses



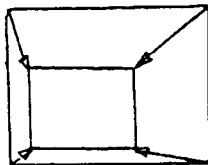
Camera Adjust: the camera moves less than
one full frame in any direction; arrows drawn
from one frame to the other.



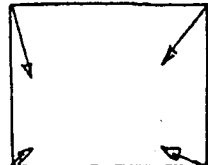
Adj. Left

Only show the entire frame of the stop point

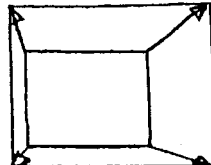
Using moves in combination-



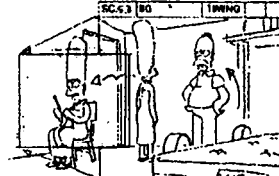
Push In / Truck In
Slow In / Smash in



Drift In
if the cut to the next shot
comes before the camera stops



Push Out / Truck Out
Slow Out / Smash Out
WIDEN



Push In/ Cam. Adj. Left with Marge



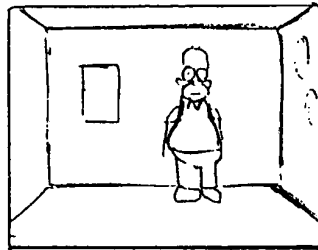
Slight Adj. Right with Lisa

CAMERA MOVES WITHIN THE FRAME

Angles are our friends!

or

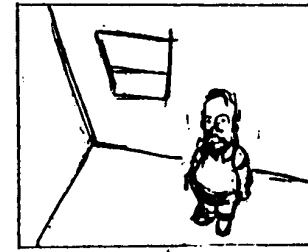
Springfield is NOT a two dimensional world



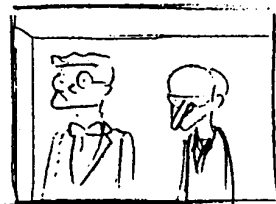
BORING! FLAT! UNINSPIRED!
Unless that's what you WANT,
don't draw it!



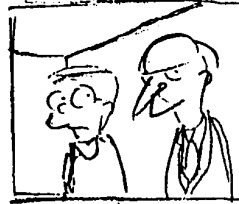
Better!
Show at **LEAST 3 PLANES**
in a room!
Try to avoid having floor lines
exactly parallel to the bottom
of the frame!



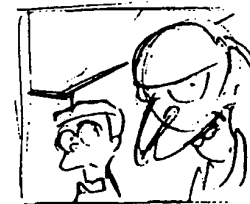
**Whoa! This is dynamic...but, the
angle draws TOO much attention
away from the scene.**
Unless it's a really dramatic
moment, keep it simple!



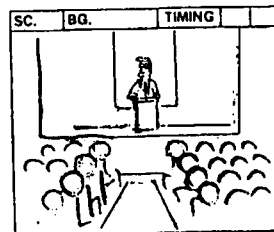
Ok, there are three planes in
the Background, but Smithers
and Burns are standing exactly
next to one another...which
flattens the scene out.
BORING!



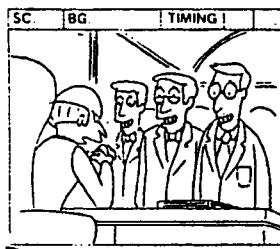
BETTER! MORE DYNAMIC!
3 planes of the room, Burns is
closer creating depth. He
is placed higher in the frame
than Smithers, subconsciously
making Burns more important!



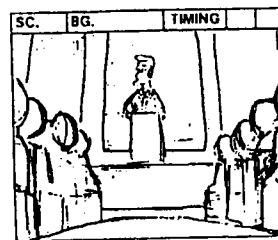
**Whoa! Burns is almost on TOP
of us. Very dynamic, but again,
save it for the scenes that
call for it!**



This is a 'STOCK' shot of Rev. Lovejoy speaking to the congregation. Since it's been used in shows before, it'll be easy to layout...but...the Rev. better not be saying anything too important, cause it's a fairly boring shot.



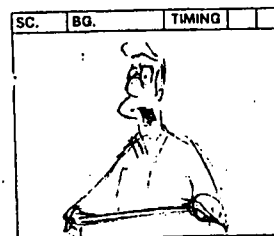
A mundane shot...Burns has no power here, and the lawyers seem to be standing the same distance from the camera as Burns is in his seat!



Better! Lovejoy must be saying something important, because he's above us and all the 'lines' of the shot draw the eye to him. And it still shows us where we are AND that the congregation is there...but easier to draw since you only see those people on the aisle!

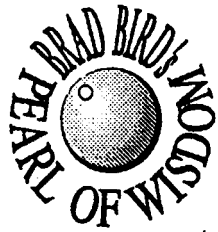


A more dramatic shot. The difference is subtle. But now Burns holds more power, and the distance between the lawyers and Burns is emphasized. All thanks to LOWERING THE HORIZON!

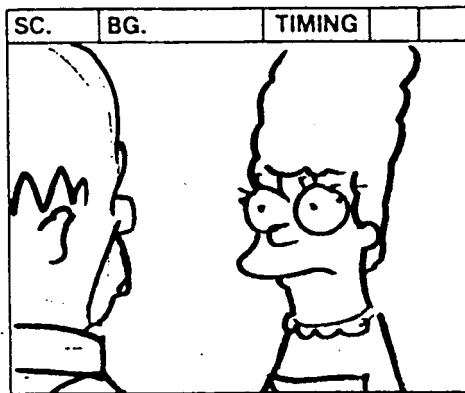


If what Lovejoy's saying is more important, you could even START on a low shot of him...then later cut to a wide shot showing the congregation...maybe an 'over the Rev.'s shoulder' shot.

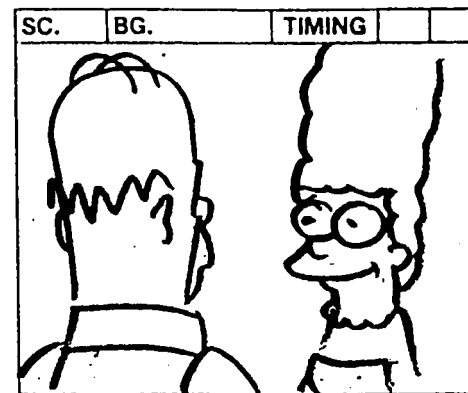
ANOTHER



Don't cut off heads in the frame.
Cutting off heads is bad.
I hate people who cut off heads.



Homer! Is that you? By only showing half of an already abstracted character, it's harder subconsciously to recognize that it's Homer.



Ahhh! It IS Homer. Even though his head takes up almost half of the frame, it feels more comfortable than when it was cut in half. Also, he doesn't draw focus from Marge because you can't SEE HIS FACE.

Of course, this isn't set in stone...some directors don't have a problem cutting off heads on 'over the shoulder' shots. And sometimes, the scene may even call for it...you may want the viewer to feel boxed in or slightly confused. But, just keep in mind...BRAD HATES IT!

STORYBOARDING

THE SIMPSONS

Part 2 by Chris Roman

WAY



Contents:

TRANSITIONS

FOCUS

Screen Direction Part 1

Screen Direction Part 2

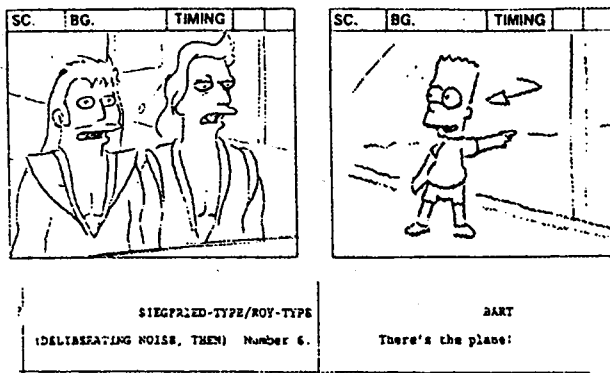
Screen Direction Part 3

Types of Shots (Wide/Med/CU)

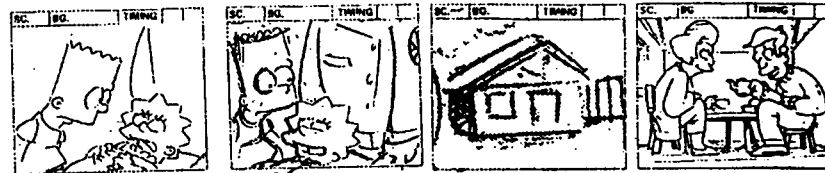
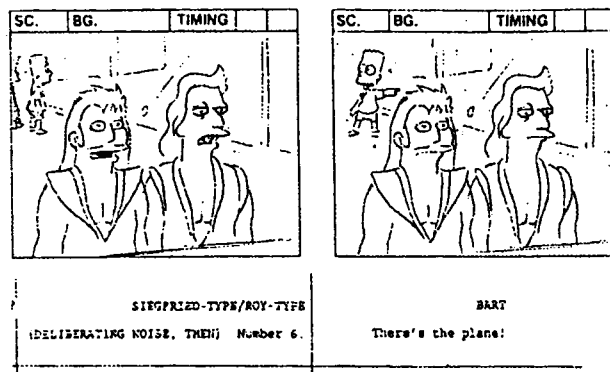
More Types of Shots

TRANSITIONS

One of the most important jobs of a good storyboard artist is to create smooth transitions between scenes! Don't just cut to the next scene, or to a new establishing shot...try and be creative!



two scenes happen in the same locale. Why break it up?

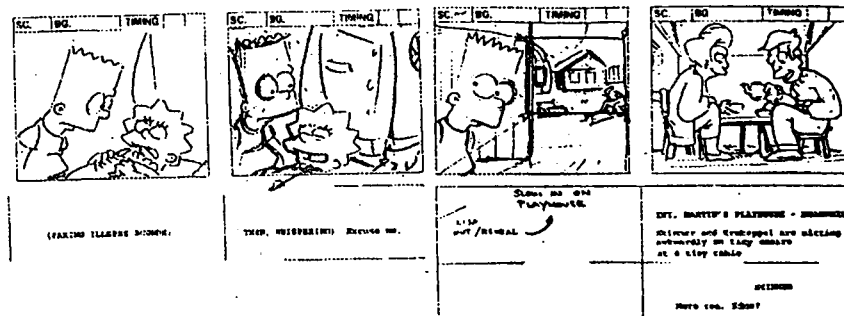


Again, these two scenes happen in the same locale. Why break it up? By cutting to an EXT. PLAYHOUSE shot, it breaks up the flow of the story.

EXT. BART'S PLAYHOUSE - BIRMINGHAM
Dr. Hibbert and Krabappel are sitting awkwardly on tiny chairs at a tiny table.

ACTION
How can I help?

But by PUSHING IN past Bart the flow is maintained, and yet we move into a new scene.



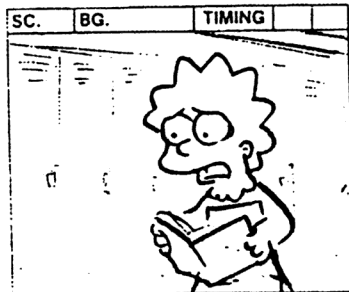
FOCUS

What are we REALLY looking at?

I have no idea.



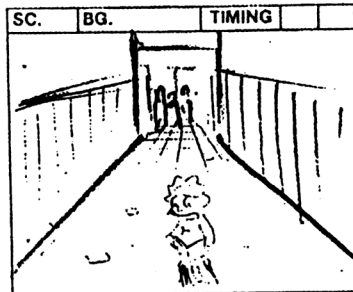
Think about each scene and what it's really about. Should we be drawn in? Or should we feel detached? Who or what should we be looking at?



LISA

But I should be the most popular girl in school.

Lisa's just been snubbed by her classmates, even though having lots of extra-curriculars should make her popular...so she thinks. **THIS SHOT** shows Lisa, but who cares?

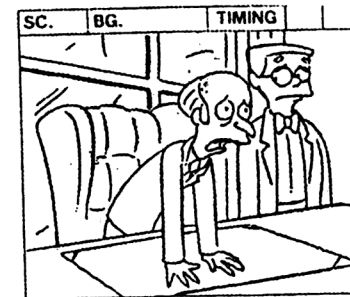


LISA

But I should be the most popular girl in school.

THIS SHOT emphasizes Lisa's aloneness by isolating her. **PLUS** it puts her below us, making her even more pathetic.

Sometimes the text alone can carry a scene, but it's up to you to find where you can enhance the **FOCUS**, literally and psychologically, with your composition!



BURNS

My money's all gone?

Burn's has just been told all his money's gone. Still, he's a powerful man...but not in this drawing. In fact, although he's in the center of the frame, he's competing for focus with Smithers, who's as big as Burns, and the ample background space visible.



BURNS

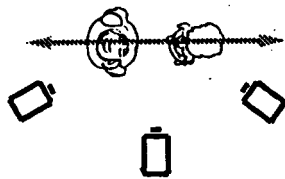
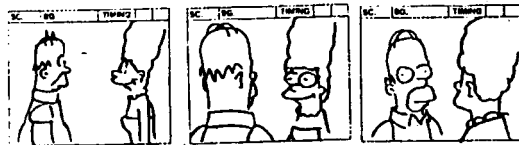
My money's all gone?

Brad's revision makes Burns the clear focus, plus adds drama with an unshot on Burns; he's still powerful but his plea here is more urgent than in the other composition.

SCREEN DIRECTION

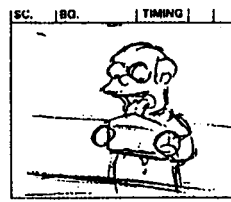
PART ONE: STAYING ON THE GOOD SIDE OF THE CAMERA LINE

Keeping the 'camera' from jumping the 'camera line' is the easiest thing to learn, easiest mistake to spot, but is still the most common mistake board artists make!

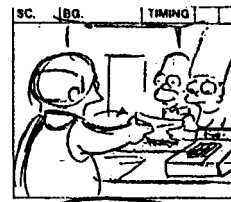


Whichever direction the characters are **FACING** at the beginning of a scene...the invisible eyeline between them is the **CAMERA LINE**. Crossing over that and seeing the characters from the opposite side is a **JUMP CUT** (a bad thing).

In live action...this line can be formed just by the directions the person's eyes are looking... but because animation deals with abstract two dimensional characters, the direction they **FACE** is the key factor.



This scene starts with the man behind the counter facing **LEFT**.



Then **SUDDENLY** he's facing **RIGHT!**

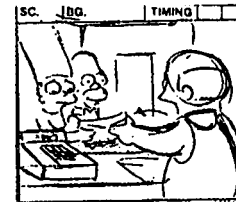
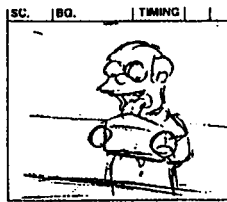


Jailbird comes in, making Homer turn to the **LEFT**.



But we cut to him **SUDDENLY** facing **RIGHT!**

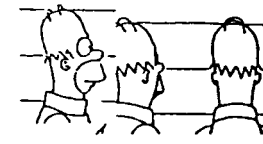
In this sequence, the camera's jumping all over the place! Even though no one actually moves anywhere in the room, it's harder for the viewer subconsciously to keep everything straight with the camera randomly jumping around.



By simply flopping the two middle panels, we keep the man behind the counter and Homer facing the right way...and it makes the scene much more comprehensible.



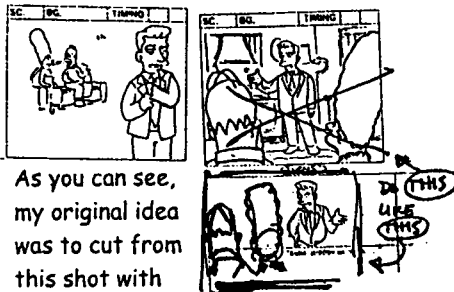
AN EASIER WAY TO REMEMBER THIS:
If the character is facing one direction in one shot, keep them facing that way in **EVERY SHOT** (unless you see them turn).



SCREEN DIRECTION

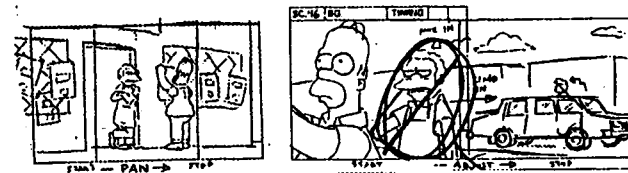
PART TWO: STAYING ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE SCREEN

This isn't as much a rule as crossing the CAMERA LINE, but it's just as helpful in keeping things CLEAR in your staging and storytelling.



As you can see, my original idea was to cut from this shot with Homer and Marge in the background, to a shot where the Security Salesman stands between them. IN theory, this would put him psychologically between them as well... **BUT**

The scene would be better served by keeping the Homer and Marge TOGETHER, since the Sec. Salesman is playing against BOTH of them.



This scene starts out with Moe on the left and Homer on the right...and the next shot DOES work in the context of the scene. Homer is still facing left, and Moe doesn't start out in the scene. This allows for him to enter the frame now facing screen left...

BUT

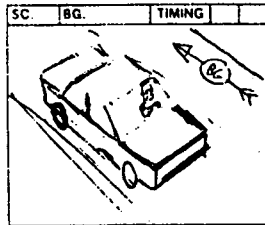
The cutting is smoother if we STAY on both Moe and Homer, keeping them both in the same spots in the frame relative to one another.



KEEP THE CUTTING CLEAN BY KEEPING THE CHARACTERS IN THE SAME RELATIVE SPACE IN SEQUENTIAL SHOTS... (NOT THE SAME SIZE (WHICH WOULD CREATE JUMP CUTS)).

SCREEN DIRECTION

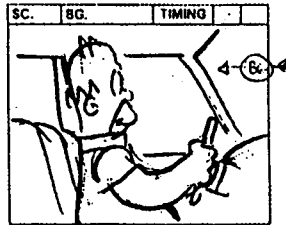
PART THREE: CONTINUITY IN MOVING DIRECTIONS



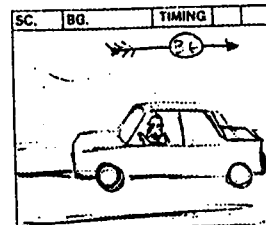
Psychologically speaking... LEFT TO RIGHT is more natural to the eye (we read that way).

Compositionally, keep some space in FRONT of the car or character in the direction they're moving; the viewer subconsciously needs to feel the character has someplace to go.

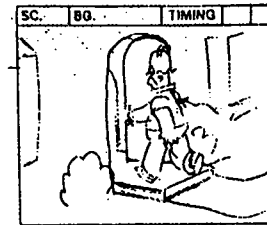
IN THIS SHOT, the car is moving left to right shown by the ARROW CALLING FOR THE BACKGROUND (BG) TO PAN BEHIND THE CAR FROM RIGHT TO LEFT.



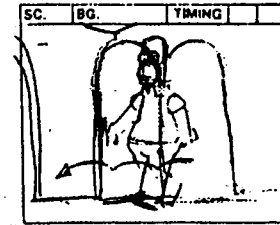
We cut to inside the car. The BG continues in the same direction- Right to Left...keeping Homer travelling LEFT TO RIGHT.



After a few scenes, Homer's on his way home. To emphasize that he's going home, the OPPOSITE of where he was going, he should now be travelling RIGHT TO LEFT.



Homer's back, and he's outside his house going in. He's STILL moving LEFT TO RIGHT, continuing the emphasis that he's going AWAY from wherever he'd been.

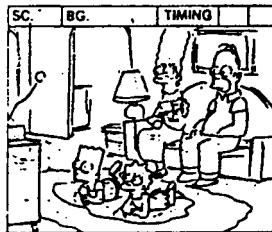


Inside, you keep Homer going LEFT TO RIGHT ...not just to continue the 'going home' feel, but also because Homer creates a

CAMERA LINE ALONG THE DIRECTION HE'S TRAVELLING!

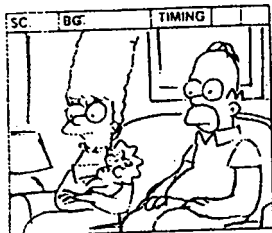


TYPES OF SHOTS



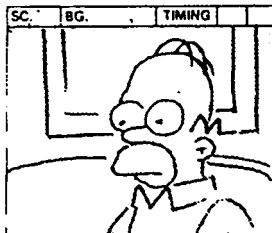
WIDE SHOT (also LONG or ESTABLISHING)

Composition showing **WHERE** we are, **WHO** is there, and where they are **IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER**. Simply staged to allow the viewer easy comprehension and acclimation. This shot is the most important shot of any sequence...all shots afterwards are based around it. It doesn't have to be the first shot of a scene, but it **MUST** happen at some point, otherwise the viewer will be disoriented.



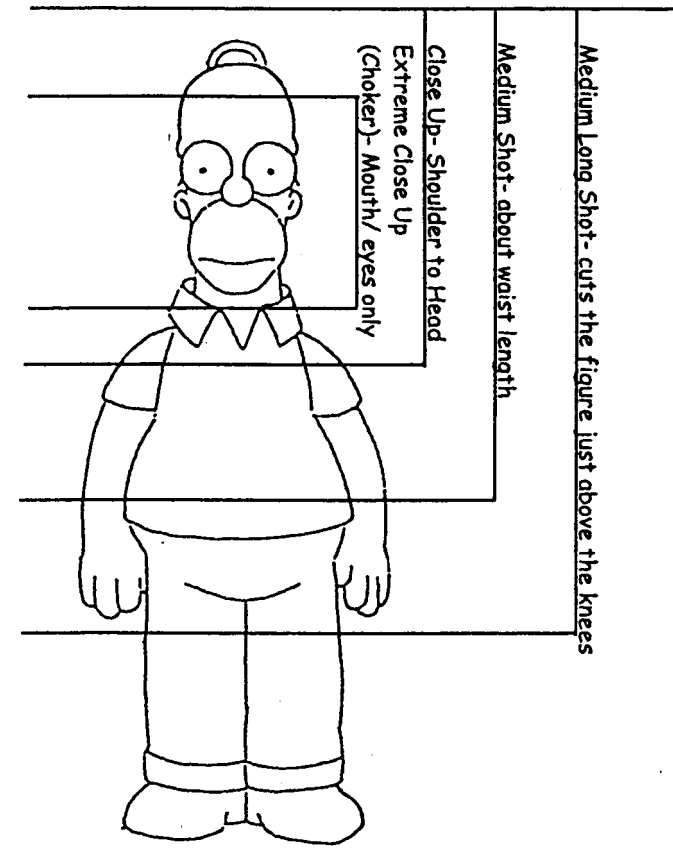
MEDIUM SHOT

Used when the characters become more important than the surroundings. Shows facial expressions **AND** gestures while continuing the relationships between one or two other characters.



CLOSE UP

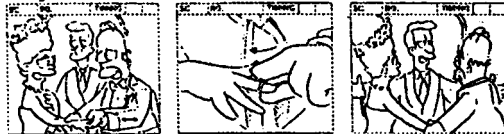
This shot involves the viewer more, focusing on a particular character or object. Subtle facial acting is used, or there is text to be read, small details to be noticed. Close-ups involve minimal animation while being powerful images...just don't overuse them.



MORE TYPES OF SHOTS

INSERTS

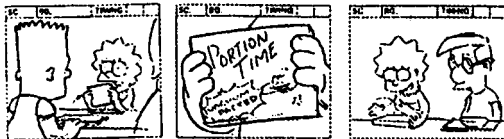
Full screen close-ups of actions, objects, text, or character's reactions placed as if inserted over a longer scene, or over another character's dialogue.



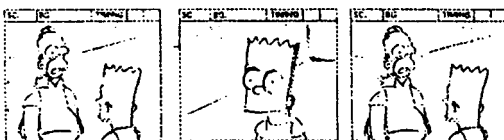
Inserted close-up of important action within a wider shot scene



Inserted close-up of important object linking two separate shots in the same location



Inserted close-up of important object with text to be read



Inserted close-up of Bart's reaction to what Homer is saying (Homer's dialogue continues over shot of Bart)

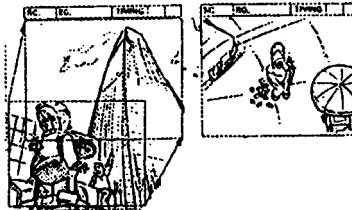
UPSHOTS and DOWNSHOTS

Upshots place the viewer beneath the focus and downshots place the viewer above, physically AND psychologically. Since most shots are straight on, upshots and downshots add variety and drama to scenes.



From the med. long shot we cut to a DOWNSHOT of Lisa, Marge's POV, which sets up the UPSHOT of Marge, Lisa's POV.

This UPSHOT accentuates the height of the World Trade Center, and the distance Homer must go. The DOWNSHOT on Homer, the virtual POV of the top of the tower, isolates Homer and makes him even more pathetic.



TILT/ DUTCH ANGLE

Used when wierd, violent, unstable, impressionistic or other novel views are needed.



TWIST IN to a tilt over-dramatizes a reaction to someone or something.

REVERSE SHOT



Normally, it's a bad idea to cross the CAMERA LINE...but sometimes rules can be broken, like in this scene. Here, we cut to a REVERSE ANGLE to see Homer & Marge's reactions. We can do this, because their locations in relation to Rev.Lovejoy were strongly established in the first shot.

When you choose your shots, think in terms of both the **DRAMATIC IMPACT** on the audience, and **VISUAL VARIETY!**



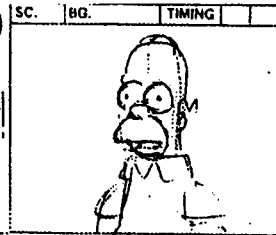
EVEN MORE

TYPES OF SHOTS



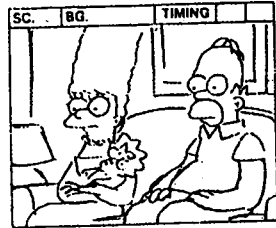
ONE SHOT

How basic can you get?
One person in the shot!
They're the focus!



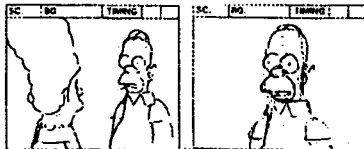
TWO SHOT

Two people,
usually with
dialogue relating
to one another.

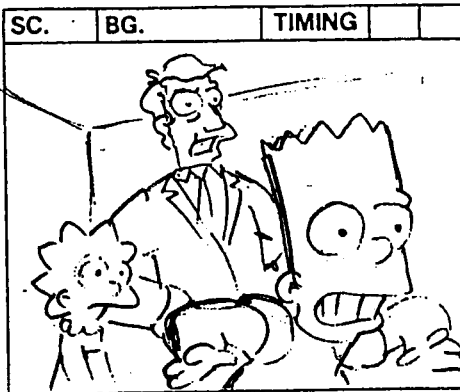


OVER THE SHOULDER (OTS)

Two shot
which puts
focus on the
character
facing camera, yet
still subconsciously includes the other character.
This shot sets up for the ONE SHOT, as if the
viewer has assumed the other character's POV.



THREE SHOT



Three characters in
a shot...duh!

STAGING IN DEPTH

As in this THREE SHOT, not
every composition needs to
be viewed from straight on!
Move the camera to angles
which create depth, placing
one or more of the characters
closer in the foreground, or
back into the background.

THIS THREE SHOT makes
Bart the focus by being face
front, but also closest to us.
But, because of the triangular
shape created, Skinner is in
power in the scene standing at
the top of the triangle.

USING THE AUX. PEGS TO CREATE 3 DIMENSIONS

Take advantage of auxillary pegs to
create multi-plane effects when
you think it might enhance the flow!
Use it to PAN IN characters during
a truck out (see example) or PAN OUT
a character the viewer is looking over to
truck into the character being spoken to
(OTS example- PAN OUT Marge as camera
TRUCKS IN to a ONE SHOT of HOMER)



PAN IN Bart



PAN IN Marge/Lisa
TRUCK OUT