# The cold open, second rung

*Stranger Things, S1 E1. Eight moments from the ninety seconds you described for homework.*

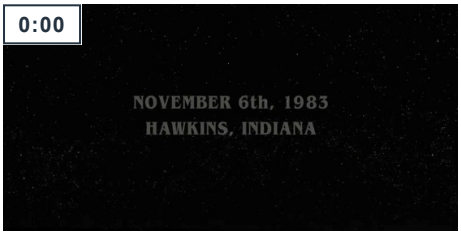
Your paragraph was the first rung: what is there. Today you climb to the second: what it makes you think. One rule, every time. A meaning in the Suggests box has to point at something in the frame or on the soundtrack. Write that thing in the Because box. If you cannot find it, the meaning came from you, not from the clip, and it does not go on the page.

> *The* **[signifier]** *suggests* **[connotation]**, *because* **[the code, or the knowledge that makes that reading available]**.

**1 · THE SIGNIFIER TEST**
What on screen or on the soundtrack made you think that? No answer, no entry.

**2 · THE CULTURE TEST**
Who would not read it this way? If nobody, it may be a denotation. If someone, name what they lack.

**3 · THE RUNG TEST**
A description with a feeling attached stays on rung 1. A meaning built on a description is rung 2.



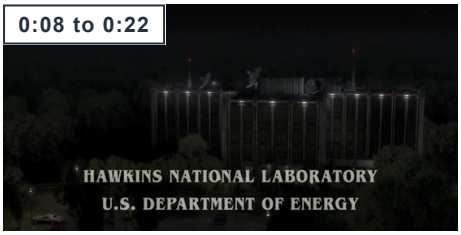

## 1 The date card

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

> White text on stars: November 6th, 1983. Hawkins, Indiana. Almost no sound.

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

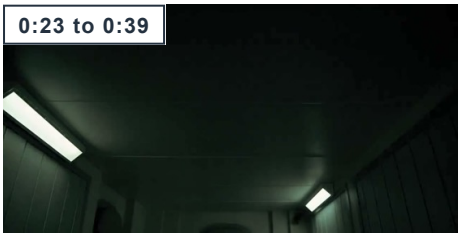



## 2 The building and its caption

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

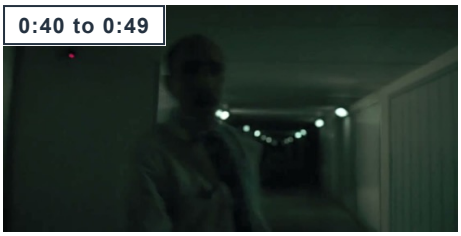



## 3 The corridor, before anyone is in it

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

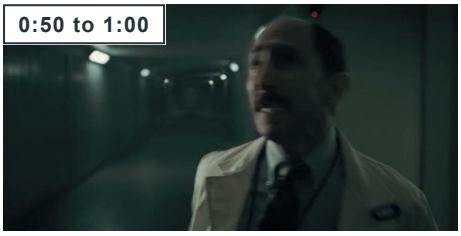



## 4 The man

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

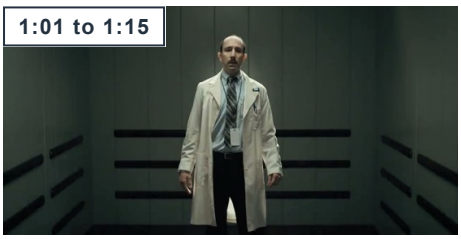



## 5 The elevator button, the look back

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

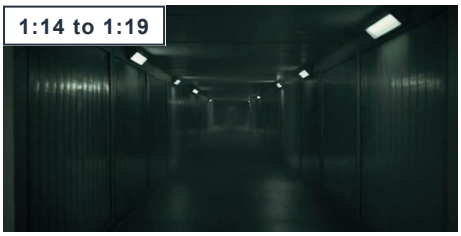



## 6 In the elevator, facing out

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*




## 7 The lights go out. He looks up

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*




## 8 Taken. The empty elevator

**SHOWS** *from your paragraph: what is there, and what you hear*

**SUGGESTS** *what it makes you think*

**BECAUSE** *the signifier that made you think it, and the code it uses*

### THEN, ONE PARAGRAPH

Choose two of the eight. Write four sentences: for each moment, one sentence that says what it suggests, and one that names the signifier and the code that carried it. End with one sentence on this: which of your meanings would a viewer from another culture, or a viewer who has never seen a horror film, not have? That sentence is the one the exam is looking for.

### WORD BANK, FOR THE BECAUSE BOX

coat · badge · tie · caption · typeface · fluorescent tube · corridor · heavy door · bollard · button · elevator · grating · the hum · the alarm · the pulse · the silence · close-up · point of view · the camera behind him · the camera above him · the cut · the held shot · the lights in sequence · the look up · symmetry · the frame within the frame

Four code families: **technical** (camera, light, edit, sound design) · **symbolic** (objects, colour, dress, gesture, setting) · **written** (any text in the frame) · **audio** (what you hear)