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This exercise is designed to encourage students to think about the political aesthetics embedded in film lighting choices. In other words, lighting and mise-en-scene are more than just visual style. You can have students read the articles listed in the bibliography before or after you facilitate this exercise. I use this exercise in film/video production classes as well as in film analysis classes. In a film analysis class it works very well to show both films first and then do the exercise with stills. You can also show a scene from each film and then use stills to do the exercise.

Films:

*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) & *Moonlight* (2017)

Clips:

- 1). *Guess Who* [https://youtu.be/72sXDT\\_H1Gg?t=41](https://youtu.be/72sXDT_H1Gg?t=41) (scene starts indoors and goes outdoors)
- 2). *Moonlight* indoor <https://youtu.be/FSLxMtaBILU>
- 3). *Moonlight* outdoor <https://youtu.be/uS6ctEELzOk?t=85>

I use this exercise when I'm introducing or reviewing lighting, with variations in my set-up, depending on the class and the students' level of expertise. I normally start by asking the students to write down the major functions of light in film/television and then review – or teach -- the basics of color temperature and other aspects of lighting. If they already know this well then I skip forward and just start with the clips.

Set-up: Explain the historical context of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Loving v. Virginia and the Hays Code). Sometimes we discuss film stock up front and other times I save that for the end.

Exercise: Watch three short clips and analyze the clips for their lighting aesthetic.

Pay particular attention to the way that the characters are lit and any differences between the way characters are lit. Please also notice the mise-en-scene and in particular the way the set and costumes contribute to the lighting aesthetic. As you are analyzing these clips consider the way you feel about the characters in relation to one another and what the lighting and mise-en-scene communicate to you about these characters. I show the clips once and then show the screen shots from the clips.

Next take a few minutes to chat with your neighbor about what you observed.

Bring everyone back together to report on their group discussions.

Short Bibliography:

<http://fortune.com/2017/09/12/issa-rae-ava-duvernay-lighting-for-black-people/>

<https://deadline.com/2014/12/selma-bradford-young-black-cinematography-1201338543/>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/movies/12-years-a-slave-mother-of-george-and-the-aesthetic-politics-of-filming-black-skin/2013/10/17/282af868-35cd-11e3-80c6-7e6dd8d22d8f\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a79ac5ea31e8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/movies/12-years-a-slave-mother-of-george-and-the-aesthetic-politics-of-filming-black-skin/2013/10/17/282af868-35cd-11e3-80c6-7e6dd8d22d8f_story.html?utm_term=.a79ac5ea31e8)

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/sep/21/its-lit-how-film-finally-learned-how-to-light-black-skin>

<https://mic.com/articles/184244/keeping-insecure-lit-hbo-cinematographer-ava-berkofsky-on-properly-lighting-black-faces#.fsE4lVHWx>