

## **Cabinet of Doctor Caligari Task**

The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari is a 1920 horror film directed by Robert Wiene. The film is considered the quintessential work of German Expressionist cinema by many and tells the story of an insane hypnotist named Caligari who uses a somnambulist named Cesare to commit multiple murders. The film's use of Mise-En-Scene, cinematography and editing are regarded as innovative due to its representation of German Expressionism.

### **Mise-En-Scene:**

After the First World War, Germany was forced to experiment with new ideas and with themes such as madness, insanity and betrayal, heavily influenced by experiences in the War and is reflected by the film's set design. The film features artificially painted sets that are dark and twisted as well as extremely confusing at times. It features large spiky trees, jagged landscapes, large spiraling staircases as well as oddly shaped buildings that lean and stand at different angles. This is used to create a chaotic and uneasy feeling within the audience because it is meant to represent the main character's insanity as he is revealed to be inside a mental asylum at the end of the film, suggesting that the film's events were fabricated in his head. Similarly, this can also represent the isolation that Germany felt after the First World War which heavily inspired the expressionist movement. Additionally, the film features a heavy use of Low-Key light in order to create a dark and sinister atmosphere, once again reflecting both the main character's thoughts as well as the entire expressionist movement.



### **Cinematography and Editing:**

The film constantly uses extreme close ups in order to showcase all the characters' emotions. This is mainly due to the fact that German expressionism had a heavy emphasis on showcasing an inner emotional reality rather than showing traditional films such as action films or romantic films and the film is able to successfully achieve this effect by constantly focusing on a main character's facial expressions and emotions. Similarly, due to the fact that cameras were stationary and not handheld during this time period, the close ups of the characters' faces are sudden

and abrupt. This helps in making their emotions and expressions seem more effective. Additionally, there are also many instances in the film that features many long shots. This is done to showcase the film's twisted and almost otherworldly set design.

**Influences:**

The film's Mise-En-Scene, editing and cinematography has heavily influenced many recent films. The most well known examples are Tim Burton films such as "Edward Scissorhands" which features very similar set design as well as Edward's appearance being heavily inspired by Cesare's character. Additionally, film uses close ups frequently to showcase Edward's emotions much like in Caligari. Another film influenced by Caligari is Pan's Labyrinth which also features similar set design.

