

Unlike Orson Welles, who overwhelms his viewers with a multitude of details and enormous sets, Alfred Hitchcock uses the narrative economy and efficiency of classical Hollywood cinema. Most of his scenes start with a shot of the town or a house that provide the viewers with some information about the scenario in which the movie takes place, society, weather, and time of day. The camera then moves inside the house where Hitchcock places emphasis on the characters, their conversations and emotions, rather than on the contents of the room. However, every object has a purpose, and sooner or later it will be used by the characters, therefore only aiding in the story telling and developing of the action.

In “Shadow of a Doubt,” a great example of narrative economy, we can observe in the scene where Charlie goes into her uncle’s room, to bring him some refreshments before bed-time. Before she enters the room, the viewers notice the empty corridor and the door to the room. She knocks on the door, and then enters the room at his invitation. A medium close-up shot prevents us from seeing anything else in that room most of the time. She notices the missing pages of the newspaper that earlier in the day he had removed because he was trying to prevent her family from reading something incriminatory about him. Uncle Charlie sits on an armchair cleaning his shoes. Although we get a long camera shot, nothing else but the window is visible. He angrily removes the newspaper pages from his niece’s hands. She then goes to her room, once again using the door. As we can see, all the elements in that room were “used up” and the viewers’ focus is concentrated on the characters, their dialog and reactions.

The camera then provides us with a quick shot of the house at night, to indicate that it's late. In the next scene, the two girls—Ann and Charlie—are exchanging a few words in their room. Charlie is using a brush that she places on the bed table, and then turns off the light. There are two beds in the room for them to sleep on. Everything in this room is also “used up.”

In the movie “Rear Window” an example of narrative economy can be seen in the scene where Jeff and Lisa have an argument about their different lifestyles. Lisa sits on the bed while Jeff is in his wheelchair. The camera focuses mainly on the actors through medium close-up shots, even when they move around the room. The room's lamps provide the necessary lighting, the table next by the door holds Lisa's gloves, which she picks up just before she leaves Jeff's apartment, and the door is used when Lisa exits the room. Even the open windows have a purpose: they allow Jeff to explore his neighborhood and to hear a woman screaming.

Generally, Hitchcock's “Rear Window” and “Shadow of a Doubt” use narrative economy. Even jewelry has purpose. In “Rear Window” they portray Lisa as a sophisticated lady, while in “Shadow of a Doubt” they are used as presents and murder evidence. Every object in the room will be used sooner or later. They're there only to assist the characters and aid in the progression of the narrative, and the viewers are not always aware of their presence.