

One writer on IMDB made the comment that the best movies "touch the soul." Shawshank Redemption achieves greatness, indeed perfection, not because of special effects or action or violence or any semblance of distraction. It achieves greatness because it touches the soul with a straightforward cinematic experience filled with brilliant dialogue, exemplary performances and a message of hope in the midst of the darkest of times. It is a message that resonates deeply and grows more intense with each subsequent viewing of the film.

The first time I viewed Shawshank Redemption I didn't find it to be anything special. Sure, stars Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman were good BUT their performances weren't anything special...or so I thought at the time.

Frank Darabont directs Shawshank Redemption with a gentle, guiding hand allowing the actors to discover the essence within their characters. Some actors, undoubtedly, would not be up to the task. Robbins and Freeman, however, are not "some actors." They are consummate actors and masterful in their portrayals here.

Based upon Stephen King's novella, Darabont creates a film that never buys into the drama of its story, instead choosing to present the lives of the characters involved without histrionics. I have long felt, in fact, that the film may even improve upon the novella by bringing it into focus and providing it with a pacing that allows a more explicit character development.

I have noticed that many of my favorite films are ensemble pieces, and while Robbins and Freeman shine here it is actually the entire cast that brings this story to life with such grace and beauty. Supporting performances by the likes of James Whitmore, William Sadler, Gil Bellows and others who take what could be caricatures and give them in-depth personalities and thoughts and feelings.

Thomas Newman's score is supremely divine and changes along with the characters. It further enhances Darabont's pacing, as well. There are so many memorable scenes in Shawshank Redemption, however, the closing scene is certainly among one of the best closing scenes ever witnessed.

It is hard to fathom that a "prison" movie could be a source of tremendous hope, light and inspiration. Yet, to call Shawshank Redemption a prison movie is to minimize its greatness. It is a brilliant film, a study of humanity in all its wonder AND it happens to take place within the confines of a prison.

Moving, brilliant, inspirational, hopeful and empowering are all words that describe "The Shawshank Redemption." With outstanding performances from its ensemble cast and a work of tremendous cinematic poetry by director Frank Darabont. "Shawshank Redemption" creates a stellar vision that teaches, challenges, inspires and evokes a wide array of emotions and thoughts that serves to remind us that in the darkest moments of our lives there is always a light that shines within.