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Symbolic Imagery

15 September 2024

A Quiet Place Symbolic Imagery

I remember first seeing this movie a couple of years ago and I thought something was completely different about this movie from the very beginning. Rewatching this movie after taking some film classes I began to understand why. Let’s start at the beginning of the film when we are met with “DAY 89”. Now we the audience know that something has happened previously and we will find out more later. Moving from that opening title card we are greeted by a small town with empty cars, broken lights, and no people. This is a great setup into the world and without having words the audience can understand that this is in an apocalyptic world. Through the opening scenes, we are given very little to go on to understand what the characters are hiding from. The best way to show what they are afraid of is through the movements of the characters. Since the characters can’t talk they have to show not tell subtly. This is shown by having the characters being light on their feet and looking around them constantly. When the characters are in a convenience store in the beginning we get a shot that follows the daughter and shows that she has a hearing aid attached so now we know she is at a disadvantage from the rest of her family. While in the store the youngest child can be seen grabbing a toy spaceship. This shows that this child might cause trouble as sound is the established enemy. As the family is about to exit the store the camera follows the child holding the spaceship but John looks at his kid in fear and moves very slowly towards his kid to take the potential danger away from the noise-making spaceship. This all creates stress and uncertainty between the characters and the audience. Next when the family leaves and goes on their way walking on sand to cover the noise. We hear a sound go off and of course, we know it was from the little kid. John looks back in terror and when the daughter sees this reaction from her father we the audience now know that something bad will happen. John starts to run toward his son and he looks to the right as he tries to reach his son just a second away a monster or alien comes out of nowhere and kills the kid. This shows that the threat is even bigger than we first thought as it killed a powerless and totally innocent little boy. When we move forward a bit into the film we get a scene of the two kids playing Monopoly. I didn't catch this the first time but the items they use for Monopoly are fabric and yarns to show that even at a safe place like their home they still need to be quiet. When I watched this movie again I paid more attention to the props and the set design.

The daughter always has her hearing aid in the senses and if you pay attention to this brings the audience back to her point of view and how she is feeling and taking in the world. In close-up shots of the deaf daughter, all sound is cut for the audience which makes the reactions the actors have so much more meaningful. The way everyone communicates through this film is the use of sign language and as Emily Blunt uses sign language she also mouths the words adding more depth and sincerity to the characters.

When I first watched this scene I felt so uneasy, in suspense, moving in my set, and trying to look away but I couldn’t and I bet many others felt this way too. The scene I am referring to is when Emily Blunt moves down the stairs while being in labor and she steps on the nail. The camera gets a close-up of the nail protruding into her foot. Now I have stepped on a nail before and I remember that pain and I screamed out loud from the shock and the pain. So when watching the scene of her trying to not make a sound while being in labor, an alien in the house, and bleeding. I was in awe of this as the sound you hear is the squish from the nail, then the reaction of Emily trying to hold in the pain while making no noise. Then we get another close-up of her pulling her foot off the nail and bleeding then proceeding down the stairs but then her water breaks. You can understand the pain and fear she is in all from the reactions.

Another scene I thought was great for visuals is when Emily and her kids are in the basement with the alien. One shot displays a sentence on the whiteboard circled. It read “What is the weakness?” This gives the daughter an idea to switch back on her hearing aid as it sets off feedback that harms the creature, disorienting the creature and giving Emily a chance for a killing blow to the head of the creature. Then from the sound of the gun, you see more creatures on the security monitor around the family. This was a great visual showing not telling the audience of the newfound weakness of the enemy.

For the film that I would like to create I would love to try and recreate aspects of the storytelling used with no dialogue. I have a movie in mind that I would like to create and I would use aspects of this movie to show suspense by the use of the close-ups and making it very emotional and precise. I would like to create a world where the audience can feel uncertainty from looks, movements, and reactions. I would use the camera to also create awkwardness between characters as the Bear show does. The creativity used in A Quiet Place is very unique in the reactions, close-ups, and world-setting. I have been inspired by this from the character development of all the characters in this movie as there is mainly a cast of five with very close relationships without saying a single word.