Symbolic Imagery in Silent Films Essay

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The film that I watched and will write about is the film *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski, 2018). This film takes place in modern day time. The plot is about a family living in a small town, that survives in a world where aliens will attack you and destroy everything you love around you if you make even the smallest amount of noise. The film is a silent film where there is very minimal talking.

Right away in the first 7 minutes of the film, there are no dialogue or sound. We see a store that has been mildly ran sacked for supplies, and a brother and sister walking around. The younger sibling goes to reach for the electronic spaceship and knocks it off the shelf, only for his big sister to catch it before it hits the ground. She then looks at her younger brother with shock and fear. She then speaks to her brother using sign language. We as the audience now understand that the setting of the world is very quiet. The brother has the spaceship in his hands now and the father is using his facial features to communicate with his son. The spaceship has batteries in it and will light up and make noise when its buttons are pressed. The father grabs it and takes the batteries out. This lets us know that there are for sure not supposed to be any sound at all throughout the film. Not even ten seconds after this occurrence, we see the family walk outside of the store after grabbing supplies and we see a news article blowing in the wind that says, “It’s Noise!” To the audience, that has us thinking that this no sound problem, is globally a threat and problem, because it was on a national newspaper. These are all factors of using shot designs and little background objects to tell the story. The newspaper was not a product of a character in the film, it wasn’t on the screen for longer than a second, and it was not the center of attention. It seemed like a little clue that did not distract the audience from the family walking out of the store. They characters cannot verbally say that the world is taking over by aliens that attack you if you make noise, and they didn’t even show it. The motion and props told the story and kept the story and scene flowing without stopping. A few seconds later we see the family walking on the road, but there is a substance on the road, and they are barefoot. This gives the audience a clue on just how quiet the survivors need to be to not make a single noise. It shows the dedication it takes just to stay alive.

When it comes to sound, the only noises that you here in the film, are the noises of nature. As the family is walking back to their destination, we hear the birds chirping, the water flowing, the leaves blowing, and the many other sounds of nature. This gives you an idea as the audience that we might only see the aliens attack if the sounds are not natural and aren’t normal noises that they would usually here. There is gentle music playing as they walk back to their destination and to the audience that tells us there it is calm and safe.

In the film we are about nine minutes in when the camera is going down the line of the family walking down the sand trail, focusing on their facial expressions, which are nonchalant, and we get to the daughter’s face when the sound goes muffled and almost nonexistent. We as the audience are wondering why that could be. Does the daughter have no hearing? Is she mute? Does she have ear plugs? Suddenly, we hear toy noises coming from behind the walking family. The camera pans to the daughter who does not hear anything. She looks at her family in confusion as they have a horror look on their face. They all turn around to hear and see the son holding the spaceship with batteries in making all the noise. This is the first time we hear sound in the film so far. We as the audience can tell from that alone being the first sound, and the facial expression on the families faces, that sound is not supposed to be in this current world that they are living in. In the end of this scene, we see the kid standing there waving around the space ship, making all the noise when the father is running towards the kid to hopefully save him. No one else is making noise but the son. The alien is coming into the picture now towards the kid, racing the father to the sound. We now visually can see the alien creature and we know that these are the things that will get you and kill you if you make the sound.

Based off the films first ten minutes, we can see everything we need to see to understand what the story is based off and what the world of *A Quiet Place* really is about. We understand that there cannot be a single noise from anything even if it is the bare minimum. We see that the aliens have reached every part of the world from the newspaper. The characters have established a difference in personalities already based off their little actions and movements. As of right now we can tell that there are not very many people and life almost have to be lived like the old days without noisy electric things or powered objects that would make noise. Life in the world must be very careful and thinking about everything that you do because it could make noise. Now we know the setting, plot, and characters that we can continue to understand the story without any dialogue or very minimal dialogue. This Is all done without a single word of verbally spoken dialogue and all done by the focus of the sound, shot design, props, and acting.