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<center>Extended Dreams and an Extended Exposition: Inception</center>

The major problem with having a long exposition is that there is a possibility of the audience getting bored. If it takes a large amount of time for a movie to explain the rules of its Universe then the viewers start getting bored, and they start wondering when the movie really begins. For the movie Inception, even though the exposition is quite lengthy, for most viewers "boring" is the last word they can think of when describing the opening scenes of the movie. Christopher Nolan, the director, is known for challenging his audience with ideas that bend the concept of time and space. The movie Inception is one of the best examples of this. This movie made a huge impact the film industry as a whole from sound effects to writing scripts that require more complex imagination from the audience.

Due to the complicated premise of this movie, exposition was already a major challenge. The director had to explain to the viewers the rules of this complicated Universe and do it in such a way that viewers ensure that they are not bored. Throughout this paper, I will argue that this feat was achieved by the movie through the analysis of the exposition of Inception. As stated earlier, the exposition of this movie is quite lengthy compared to most movies and as viewers, we do not completely understand the rules of this movie until the halfway mark. For a lot of movies, this could be a major problem as there is a risk of viewers getting worn out by that point however, the director is able to keep the movie fresh and hook the viewers largely due to the exposition. This paper will analyze how the exposition: establishes mood through image and

sound, introduces us to our main characters, and the impact of the opening minutes on the rest of the movie.

The visual elements of the opening minutes are like no other movie. The director, Christopher Nolan, is known for using practical effects (Nieves). Right from the starting scene and especially for recent viewers we can see how his effects have stood the test of time, they feel as realistic as they did 13 years prior. Having realistic effects in the exposition is really important for a movie as this is what will take them from their Universe to the Universe of the movie. We start at a beach, we go to a party, we go to a riot and then finally we wake up in a train. Going through several unique scenes right from the start is quite true to how the rest of the movie will play out as this technique continues throughout this fast-paced movie. Inception is famous for a unique auditory element that now is frequently used in most action movies. This is the "BRAAAM" sound also known as the "Inception horn" (Abramovitch). Through the combination of the visual and auditory elements we as viewers right from the start understand that we are watching a distinct movie, that this movie is unlike any other cinematic experience we have had, and that whenever we see this style used somewhere else we understand it as the "Inception-style".

To understand what the director is trying to tell us as viewers about this movie through the opening minutes we cannot focus on a particular scene but have to take the exposition as a whole. The fast change of scenes with completely different backgrounds is quite unique to this movie. Throughout this movie we get to see almost all kinds of terrain from beaches to snow, we travel from Mombasa to Paris. Having several distinct scenes right from the start is telling us as viewers that the movie is going to be fast-paced, action packed, and no one moment in the movie is going to be like any other.

I believe that the visual and auditory aspects of the movie from the first opening minutes are quite effective in introducing us to the style of the movie. Throughout the movie, the style is consistent without any major shifts that remove us from the movie's feel. The visual aspects of the starting sequence are able to spark curiosity in the minds of its viewers. The premise of the movie makes it so that the visual elements of the movie are really important for us as viewers to understand the rules of the universe. We as viewers with only the visual elements are familiarized with the rules of the universe until the scene when our protagonist, Cobb, converses with Ariadne.

In the opening minutes of the movie, we are introduced to three main characters. The protagonist, Cobb is introduced in two scenes, one as a troubled person lost in the sea unable to understand what is really happening. Secondly, as a skilled professional selling his service to a potential client who in the later scenes we will find out is actually his target. The contrast between these two scenes raises questions in the mind of our viewer as to how this character journeys from the current well-composed individual to a confused one. The second character we are introduced to is Arthur, who is the sidekick of Cobb. From the beginning, it is established that even though Cobb is the main character, Arthur is not afraid to question Cobb's authority and challenge his ideas. Saito is first introduced as someone in opposition to our protagonist's mission however this character is quickly transformed as an ally. The movie also introduces an insignificant character who is an accomplice of Cobb and is disregarded for betraying Cobb's mission. This character while insignificant establishes that Arthur is a trustworthy partner of Cobb and that Saito is an ambitious individual as he chooses first to not harm Cobb and Arthur

but to partner with them for a new mission and secondly not to violently take action against the betraying character.

During the exposition and our introduction to the characters of this movie, the director is able to convey clearly the motives of each character. Our protagonist is seen having flashbacks to his children, and from a phone call, we find out that it has been some time since Cobb has been able to meet them. It is clear Cobb deeply longs to return to his children hence, when Saito makes an offer to help him with a mission in exchange for having him be able to return to his family in the US, we as viewers are able to clearly understand Cobb's interest in completing the mission. For Saito, the motivation is conveyed to us through dialogue about how he wants to break up the empire of his competitor's business, and right now after the death of its founder is the perfect time for this. The director is hence able to efficiently establish the character's motivation in the exposition which if someone were to miss would have a hard time understanding the importance of this mission.

The movie starts out by having our protagonist lying down on a beach and then taken to a Japanese-style castle by a bunch of men speaking in Japanese. Cobb is taken inside the Japanese-style castle building where he is given some food and is seen with an old man who talks to him in English. After this scene, it cuts to a party sense where he is talking with a middle-aged Japanese man, Saito, at a dinner setting while he looked old and meek in the previous scene Cobb is energetic and charismatic in this scene. Having these two scenes back to back is a way of foreshadowing to us viewers that the speaker and listener in this may be related in some way and at the end of the movie we find out that the old man whom Cobb is talking to is the same person in the party scene. A few scenes after this we figure out that this was a dream

within a dream and that our protagonist just failed a mission of getting secretive information from Saito.

There are several events that take place in the opening minutes that have a payoff towards the end for the audience. The most prominent of which is the opening scene on the beach where we later find out that the old Japanese man is Saito who has been stuck in what the movie calls the "dream limbo". From the start, we see visions of Cobb's children whose heads are always turned back not facing Cobb in the end we finally get to see them facing Cobb when our protagonist returns home. In the opening scenes, we are also introduced to the strange character of Mal, and towards the end we find out who she is and what happened to her. Payoffs like these make it so that the starting scene is not meaningless and adds to the feel of the story.

It is important to note here that unlike in some movies the Director, Christopher Nolan chooses to not have a drawn-out title card or a logo sequence. The Director jumps right into the movie is in a way another way of making sure that the audience is quickly transported into this Universe and is hooked right from the start. However, I believe that the main way for this movie to hook its audience is that this movie more than others raises a lot of questions in the opening minutes. When the director shows us several sequences of random scenes we as viewers are really curious about how the director plans to tie this all together. Some movies are unable to tie everything by the end of the movie however in the case of Inception all the questions raised in the opening minutes are answered and the audience gets a satisfying feel about the exposition because of this.

In conclusion, I think the exposition of this movie was executed well. The director was able to convey a lot of information to its viewers while keeping the movie fresh and interesting. The opening minutes of this movie are really effective in setting the mood through its distinct

visual and auditory package, the characters are established really well with their motivations being clear and relatable to the audience, and the movie is successful in tying everything seen in the exposition towards the end of the movie and answering all the questions raised in the exposition. There have been reports that it took Christopher Nolan 10 years to write this movie and I do think he was successful in presenting us with this complex story in a spectacular film format. I believe that the major takeaway from the exposition of this movie is that filmmakers should not be afraid of confusing their viewers and should take the risk of adding complexity to the opening minutes of their movies challenging the viewers to follow along with some ambiguity.

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