|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rear Window** | **1954, Alfred Hitchcock Key words – intrigue/mystery/ambiguity/voyeurism****Key sequences****The Opening 0:00-3:51****Lisa is trapped 1:31:14-1:37:54****Thorwald comes for Jeffries 1:14:24-1:45:54** | **Witness** | **1985, Peter Weir – anti-hero/community/belonging/conflict****Sequence 1 The Amish Way 00.00-9.19****Sequence 2 Gun of the Hand 46.17-50.06****Sequence 3 Grain Store** |
| Cinematography:Lighting, camera angles/moves/shots | Lighting: red skies to show time of day, time of year; night-time effects and shadows. Opening is bright as the viewer is ‘welcomed’ into the scene. Lights on in apartments tell us that someone is in and has nothing to hide/lights out tells us that something id hidden, being kept a secret; this trope allows an audience to understand how to react during key moments of the film. Trope – convention/motif/symbol. Use of shadow when Jeff moves back into the apartment to hide from Thorwold’s gaze (37:30). His is ‘hidden’ – secrets and lies.Camerawork: restricted by the set, but used to show Jeffries perspective. Voyeurism emphasized by shots through the telephoto lens of Jeff’s camera. Use of POV throughout. Until closing scene all shots are from inside of Jeff’s apartment. This works in line with the generic convention of restricted narrative. We only see what Jeff sees. Delayed POV – we see the characters reaction before we see what they are looking at. (46:58). Circular ‘vignette’ is used to indicate the lens of the camera or binoculars. Camerawork and mis-en-scene are combined in the opening sequence to inform the audience on how to read the narrative from the visual clues provided. | Cinematography:Lighting, camera angles/moves/shots | Opening sequence – The Amish Way - S1 Long shot as group appears suggests they come from the land. The time period is uncertain due to their costumes. Suggest balance and peace. Framed in similar way to Dutch painters eg Bruegel. Could represent the order of the Amish lifestyle. This is later contrasted with shots of horse and cart in modern society. It looks out of place compared to the contemporary world which is congested and filled with distractions.S2 Close ups of the gun establish its importance, symbolising the violence which has infiltrated the Amish community. Use of close up twin shot on Eli and Samuel shows their bond in contrast to the close up on Samuel as Book explains the gun.Look at the restaurant scene when Rachel and Samuel pray before eating. They are calm and peaceful in contrast to the modern urban metropolis outside. |
| Mise-en-scene | Use of the thermometer to indicate high temperature in opening sequence. Lisa’s elaborate Parisian gowns set her apart from the rest of the community. Her appearance becomes more practical as she becomes more involved in the mystery. Analyse in detail the final scene. Visual clues in opening sequence; compare these to final scene. | Mise-en-scene | Use of costume and props in S1 suggest this is a historical film rather than contemporary. Modern society is represented with giant trucks, busy streets and everyone rushing. Wooden toy represents what is important to Amish people…simplistic lifestyle.Gun becomes focus on S2 and symbolises evil. Costume – Book has no shirt on and Rachel is plainly dressed in traditional style representing the differences between their worlds. |
| Editing | Fade to black is used to denote time passing. Analyse the sequence when Thorwald leaves and returns during the night. The audience is aligned to Jeffries perspective and are uncertain what has happened due to his falling asleep. Look at fast-paced editing during sequence when Thorwald throws Jeffries out of the window. Cross-cutting in ‘Lisa is trapped’ sequence between Jeffries in one location and Lisa. Race against time scenario is classis Hitchcock. | Editing | S1 caption informs the audience of the setting and the time period. Slow paced editing allows for the development of narrative in S1 as the funeral and wake dominate. The scenes of the dusk/dawn show the agricultural lifestyle of hard physical labour undergone by the Amish.S2 cuts between Book, gun and Samuel allow weapon to become a character symbolising violence. |
| Sound | The piano piece is known as ‘Lisa’ and appears throughout the narrative. Look at use of ambient sound signifying the city and life beyond the apartment block. Analyse the use of diegetic/non/diegetic sound. Footsteps as Thorwald comes for Jeffries are over emphasised. Muffled speech in Thorwald’s apartment means that Jeffries is never completely aware of what is happening which leads to ambiguity. Increase in volume in ‘Lisa is trapped’. | Sound | S1 Maurice Jarre’s mixes folk and electronic horn which represent the Amish’s beliefs. Ambient sound during wake establishes what is important to community. Men and women seen to have separate roles. Joke about ‘one good ball’ humanises them.S2 Dialogue shows juxtaposition of Eli and Book’s worlds as well as Rachel finding it difficult to fit in with either- ‘safe to handle’/’would you be able to tell those bad men by sight?’ |
| Social Context | It is considered to be one of Hitchcock’s finest films and in 1997 was added to the US Nation Film Registry as being “culturally, historically or aesthetically significant.” Voyeurism is key to this film; Jeffries acts asour ‘eyes’ in the film and the audience can only see what he sees. Throughout the opening scenes he is admonished for being a voyeur which should be a negative; Jeffries’ nurse in particular makes it clear that what he is doing is wrong. Yet there is a clear longing from all characters in the apartment to see more, towish for more and as an audience we revel in their fascination as it enables us to see more. | Social Context | Contrast between countryside and urban living (peace vs violence and corruption). Look at Book taking Samuel to find the suspect and the barn raising. The dichotomy of society. |
| Historical Context | In 2007, the American Film Institute ranked Rear Window as the 48th Greatest Movie of All Time and in 2008 ranked it number 3 in the “Mystery” genre. When compared to many of Hitchcock’s other films, Rear Window is notable for its economical and streamlined use of locations. Throughout his career Hitchcock created thrillers which had sprawling adventures covering many countries. Often protagonists would be on the run and would travel from country to country trying to clear their name/escape. Rear Window however creates mystery and tension by rigidly sticking to one location and one POV. This makes the audience voyeurs but to things that are largely unseen, with the narrative also not revealing all. | Historical Context | This film is the anti-thesis of the high concept films popular in the 1980s; Book is sensitive and caring; not your typical macho action adventure hero.The film was criticised by sections of the Amish community for its inconsistencies and inaccuracies, whilst others argued that it was a sympathetic depiction. Some audiences liked its representation of a lifestyle which turned its back on technology and consumerism.Film was also popular as this was Harrison Ford’s first ‘straight’ dramatic role after Star Wars and Indiana Jones. |
| Institutional Context | The film was shot entirely at Paramount Studios under huge expense as a set was built to replicate a courtyard including apartments. Nominated for four academy awards but won none of them | Institutional Context | The producer was Edward S. Feldman who was turned down by his contractor 20th Century Fox as the film was thought to be ‘too rural’, hence he took it on as an independent producer. Paramount financed it eventually when he had put together the right package. Peter Weir had found fame as part of the ‘New Australian Cinema’. He wanted to make ‘a classic Hollywood film’. |
| Genre and Narrative | Rear Window has been heralded as being ‘culturally, historically or aesthetically significant’The set was built to replicate a courtyard including apartments.Voyeurism is key to the film – Cold War- Rear Window creates mystery and tension by rigidly sticking to one location and one POV. Some elements of the narrative are kept hidden even at the end of the film.ThemesJeff as voyeur. Us as voyeur. Initially Jeffries is asleep and we are spying on him as well as his neighbours.The film is in the romance thriller genre. It is typical of a ‘Hitchcockian’ film. It could be describes as a mystery or even a detective story. All of these are valid, if the evidence provided substantiates the claims. It could be said that the threat of violence, represented by Thorwold and the suspected crime, symbolises the threat to the survival of their relationship-one the crime is solved, order and harmony are restored.The murder investigation and the success of Lisa and Jeff’s relationship combine to form the narrative.The narrative is constrained by time (Wednesday morning to Saturday night) and place (Jeff’s apartment and those of his neighbours).Jeff provides perspective.One clue is provided for the audience and not Jeff…what is it? | Genre and Narrative | Mixed genre film. Part romance and part police corruption film – many films on this in 70s/80s, part Western (see gun fight sequence). Film shows the clash of cultures (see mother and Samuel in big town). Act 1 Up to the murder. CRIME THRILLERAct 2 Book protects Rachel and Samuel and hides in Amish community. ROMANCEAct 3 Arrival of corrupt police officers. WESTERNThe narrative is open-ended as we are uncertain if there will be a happy ever after for any of them. Romance conventions = romantic rival, disapproving family, concern that their love will not survive.Western convention = guns, good vs evil. Screen writers were veterans of writing for TV Westerns. Also, the hero – a man who has renounced violence and yet still stands up to the town bully ‘But it’s my way’, although he realises that he cannot remain in the peaceful community and has to leave in the end. |
| Areas for Comparison | Both **Rear Window** and **Witness** share genre and genre conventions - thriller/crime/romance Both **narratives** centre on a **murder****Roger Ebert** compared the thriller aspect of **Witness** to something which Hitchcock **“would have been proud to make”.** He continues “It is a movie about adults, whose lives have dignity and whose choices matter to them. And it is also one hell of a thriller”, something which **Rear** **Window** could easily be compared with.Whilst the key murder in Witness differs from Rear Window in that it is seen and it is clear who the killer is, the use of the **POV** through the toilet stall door shows a direct link with the voyeuristic nature of the Hitchcock thriller.Tension is created in the murder scene in Witness however through the use of **editing**, much in the same way as key sequence 2 in Rear Window. By cutting between the voyeur and the person looking for the ‘spy’, tension is created and therefore makes some direct links with how editing is used in Rear Window.Both films inform the audience of important information through the use of **props**. The opening sequence in Rear Window gives us much information about Jefferies, while the tour of the police station in Witness allows us to see who the killer is and how entrenched in the police force they are.Both films have **key characters hiding from others in shadow**. Witness- Grain store/ Rear Window Lisa is trapped. As Book avoids the corrupt policeman in the grain store, tension is created as he attempts to hide by moving into shadow and cross cutting shows him being hunted.The finale of Witness features the protagonist, Book, being outnumbered. Rear Window is much more streamlined and is one versus one, but throughout the film Jeffries is battling against most of the others in his belief. In both films the male lead is ‘fighting’ against others to protect what they believe is right and correct. |