

Landscape in the classic western



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The article "Landscape in the Western Classic text: Landscape in the Classic Hollywood Western" by Stanley Solomon focuses around the central claim that landscape is definitive to the film genre of Western, defining both plot and characterization. First, the severity of the barren landscape against which the plot of Western movies revolves suggests that the characters in the movie either have to be rugged or likely to fall prey to more rugged ones. Scarcely populated rural places allow for the clear-cut distinction between an honest group of citizens with local sheriff as their leader and a gang of immoral criminals. Since the landscape is clear-cut and straightforward, so are the characters and their moral traits. The same is true for sharply delineated codes of behavior that have to be grasped by both criminals and good guys.

The severe natural and human environments, in which the characters of the Western have to act, develop skills crucial to survival, including "competence in the face of danger, courage, determination, and endurance" (Solomon 1976). The threat in most cases comes not from nature that, for all its mercilessness, is fair and predictable in its threats, but from human villains. The struggle between moral and immoral characters is the cornerstone of the plot.

A peculiar environment often tells a lot about the women's role. Most of female characters, exactly like men, should possess strength of character and survival skills that are looked up to by men. At the same time, women bring a humanizing effect to movies, supporting the value of human life.

Western movies often call for insights into the past of the character, in contrast to urban movies where the emphasis is on the throbbing present of the city life. A Western character arrives at the scene a mature man, shaped by his past experiences, that often involve some indelible tragedy.

Understanding a character's past is essential, although information of it is often presented as a mere hint. "The interrelationships of landscape, characterization, and the past" form the central focus of the Western genre (Solomon 1976).

Bibliography

Solomon, Stanley. *Beyond Formula: American Film Genres*. 1976.