

Comparing the  
stories and  
characters of the day  
after tomorrow and i  
am legend



Through the different genres of movies, differences and similarities can be compared. Apocalyptic movies have taken center stage when it comes entertainment over the years. Although there are many apocalyptic movies, there are also many different ways directors can approach the idea of the end of the world. “ The Day After Tomorrow” (2004) and “ I am Legend” (2007) have two different takes on the idea of the apocalypse. Even though, the category is one in the same, the idea is completely different between the two films. One is able to observe the similarities and differences in this genre through the way the director approached the idea of the apocalypse, the realism of the movies, and how the characters are displayed.

“ The Day After Tomorrow”, was directed by Roland Emmerich. He approached the ‘ end of the world’ idea by using the concept of Global Warming, going through stages of hail, intense storming, flooding, snow, then eventually leading to an ice age. At first, the effects were minor; no one took note of the dangers that were in the future. The Government became involved as the progression became more aggressive; trying to keep everyone calm they attempted to fix the situation on their own. Eventually, it became clear that nothing could be done. The citizens had to make their own decisions on whether to stay where they were or follow everyone else who decided Mexico would be the safest place for the time being. It was up to seventeen year old Sam Hall (Jake Gyllenhaal) to calm the people in New York as they waited the tragedy out in a local library. Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid) ventures through the fatal, danger some struggle to retrieve his son. Once reached, the unrecognizable New York City was just a pile of snow. However, some of mankind was retrieved, and the climate shift slowly

returned to normality which saved a portion of humanity. "I am Legend" has a different take, directed by Francis Lawrence, Robert Neville (Will Smith) is the one man left in the world, as he thinks. Once the cure for cancer was discovered, life was perfect, until an infection broke out and began spreading, infecting anyone. The Government became involved trying to evacuate anyone who was not infected. The outbreak of this disease eventually, plagued the entire country turning innocent humans into these savage mutants. Neville spends most of his time hunting these mis-creations with his one companion, Sam, his dog. He constantly tests different medicines on mutated rats to try to find a cure. Once he gets into a dangerous, life threatening situation, he was saved by Anna (Alice Braga) thinking she was alone in this as well with her son Ethan (Charlie Tahan) they meet and discover that there is hope. Anna explains to Robert about the life of humanity in a different area, but he is hesitant and stubborn about the idea of leaving. Tragedy takes place when their house becomes intruded by the savages and the only way to save themselves is to destroy the house. Robert vastly decides to give Anna the cure and lets her and Ethan escape while he stayed behind. These movies have similar endings considering they both have hope for humanity and are able to reconstruct the world.

Depending on the director is whether or not they decide to make the movies realistic. Both of these movies have some sense of realism to them. The Day After Tomorrow, expresses the idea of Global Warming, which from some perspectives is in action today. Whether or not global warming ever gets to the point where the world would experience an ice age is not determined. However, the movie is not completely unrealistic there have been instances

where weather has affected the world drastically. "I am legend" may be a little less realistic. Although, there are some realistic points throughout the movie, such as the cure for cancer; even though, that has not been discovered, it may be in the future. Determining if the cure turns people into mutants is less realistic. Some studies believe there could be a zombie apocalypse sometime in the future which relates back to the mutants in the movie. Both the movies combined have some sense of realism to them, whether they are completely accurate is irrational. The pair is based purely on entertainment.

The characters through both movies have some similar actions, but for the main part they remain different. Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid) in the Day after Tomorrow was very dedicated to his work, most the time he would put his work over his son Sam Hall (Jake Gyllenhaal). When Jack realized the danger that his son was in, he risked his own life to travel across the country to be with him. Sam was standing up to be the leader while waiting upon his dad to come for him. Jack changed through the movie knowing that his family goes before anything, rather than his work. Both characters showed strength, leadership, and dedication. Robert Neville (Will Smith) in I am Legend, was the opposite with his family. His work was very important to him, but he would always put his family before anyone else. Once his family died he kept them around in spirit. It is clear once Anna (Alice Braga) and Ethan (Charlie Tahan) came into the picture he took care of them as well as he could, he treated them as his family. At the end he put their lives before his own. Robert's character proclaimed strength, humbleness, and gratitude similar to the characters in the day after tomorrow.

It is clear even if movies are in the same genre they can have different ideas on how to express it. The way the director sees the idea is how they will interpret it. No matter how different the plots are, if they are in the same genre they will share some type of similarities. One is able to view these similarities and differences through the director's view of the apocalypse, the realism of the movies, and how the characters are displayed.