

# Death representation in media

Sociology



Death Representation in Media Introduction Modern popular culture highlights different aspects of human life. Nevertheless, it should be d that representation of death is a striking issue for many directors, producers and writers. In different times death was represented differently. As the major part of narrative of selected films and books, death is shown to the readers and viewers from different points of view. American nation has a chance to reconsider their attitudes to social relations, country's politics, inner emotions and feelings while watching films or reading books about death.

Death as the major theme in books and films

I have selected nine categories of death representation in movies (horror movies; movies about war; disease as the reason for death; suicide; capital punishment; grief and sorrow; action adventure; disaster; the After Life) and two main categories of books about death (Flora and Fauna and Social relations). As far as we can see, the directors of the films and the authors of the book make an attempt to show death in a different manner. Of course, there is much fantasy, illusion and unreal stories presented in the media about death, but it is an arty-crafty method employed by the creators of films and books (Gibson, 2001). The main intention of directors and writers is to appeal for the emotions of the readers and viewers through artistic representations of invented realities and stories. The main point is that the audience reacts appropriately and feels sorrow, grief, thinks about such a global theme, as death and is focused not on the stories underlying in all these artistic genres, but to their own feelings and emotions.

The representation of death is mainly represented in different categories in compliance with the crucial social concerns of the American society

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(Category: Capital Punishment, Category: Diseases; Category: Disasters).

The books I selected are the books I read in my childhood. Children are easily influenced by representation of animals and people, family and children.

Thus, these books depict a theme of death on the examples of Flora and Fauna and social relations.

With regards to death in America, such reasons as diseases, disasters and social problems are the main triggers. It is clearly seen that directors of the films and writers take into account a real set of affairs concerning death representation. Americans are afraid of evil from within (as it is shown in the film “ Alien”). This evil can come from hazards of the global disasters (Independence Day) or inner feelings and emotions of a man (Thelma and Louise, Dead Poets’ Society). Americans believe in peace and freedom and once these two basic pillars are intimidated, the nation’s prosperity is under a strike. Another crucial issue representing a theme of death is capital punishment (12 Angry Man, Dead Man Walking). Vivid debates in America concerning capital punishment have been conducted for a long period of time. As a result, directors of the film take into account the interests of the society, but also focus their attention on murderers, who are subjected to capital punishment.

When unreal events are presented by directors, for example in films about adventures, it is clearly seen that the directors want to show that fights and struggles of humanity leads to inevitable deaths. Good guys are often winners in this fight, but their victory is rather dubious: hundreds of lives are gone and only one winner stays alive. Certainly, such representation is brutal but they consider it to be close to real life.

Conclusion

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The representation of death in media is based on crucial social concerns of the American society and based on real life events, so this representation is brutal and cruel. We can see that the directors of the movies and the authors of the book usually show death in a different manner. We may also claim that a target audience has a chance to analyze its feelings and emotions concerning death. It is essential for people to think about life and death. It is very important for the American nation to remember about the value of life and appreciate this invaluable gift given to people by God.

#### Works cited

1. Gibson, M. Death Scenes: ethics of the face and cinematic death. *Mortality*, 6, 2001: pp. 306 -320.

#### Appendix I

##### List of books and films about death

##### Category: Horror movies

1. Alien (representation of evil from within)
2. Interview with a Vampire (human inner changes and death as liberation)
3. The Burning (nightmare as a possible death)

##### Category: movies about war

4. Platoon (war in Vietnam)
5. Schindlers List (Hitler rule)
6. Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb (cold war)

##### Category: disease as the reason for death

7. Philadelphia (AIDS)
8. Love Story (heart disease)
9. Lorenzos Oil (brain disease ALD)

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Category: Suicide

10. Dead Poets Society (dream and death)
11. The Joy Luck Club (Chinese women destiny in America)
12. Thelma & Louise (escape or death)

Category: Capital Punishment

- 12 Angry Men (American justice system)
13. Dead Man Walking (a challenge of capital punishment)
14. In Cold Blood (social issues of capital punishment)

Category: Grief and Sorrow

15. Good Will Hunting (death of a beloved person)
16. Accidental Tourist (cruelties of death)
17. Always (wanderings of a soul)

Category: Action adventure

18. Rambo (a brave hero)
19. Predator (good guys vs bad guys)
20. Braveheart (good vs evil)

Category: Disaster

21. Titanic (deaths after shipwreck)
22. Independence Day (a drastic impact on the society after disaster)
23. Earthquake (humanity and huge powers of nature)

Category: The After Life

24. Ghost (an invisible existence)
25. Death Becomes Her (soul wanderings)
26. Casper (unreal world)

Books about Death

Category: Flora and Fauna

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27. Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Mills Draper

28. Tiger Eyes by Judy Blume

29. The Bridge to Teribithia by Katherine Paterson

30. A Begonia For Miss Applebaum by Paul Zindel

Category: Social relations

31. Missing May by Cynthia Rylant

32. Flip-Flop Girl by Katherine Patterson

33. Mick Harte Was Here by Barbara Park, Sam Llewellyn