

Jaws – analysis essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Analyse the ways that the director builds suspense and tension in the film.

Comment on the techniques that the Director uses to scare the audience in the film. The film we have been studying is called ' Jaws' it was directed by Stephen Spielberg. The movie is set in a town called ' Amity'; it is famous for it's beaches and sea. The town makes most of its money from tourism. However, this beach has recently had a series of shark attacks.

The water is unsafe to go swimming in, but the Mayor refuses to close the beach as it would mean they lose a lot of money from the lack of tourists on the 4th of July (American Independence Day). Jaws is still a popular film today due to it's excellent use of camera techniques, also because the events in the movie are more believable and could actually happen, this makes the film more scary. The music that is connected to the shark is initially played in the title sequence, when the names of the director, producer and main actors appear. This music is also played whenever the shark is present and in most of it's attacks. The music starts slowly and as the shark moves closer to it's prey the music speeds, similar to a heart beat speeding up as the tension and anxiety builds. The music is also used to scare the audience into thinking something is going to happen or someone is going to be attacked.

It also shows that something (the shark) is coming or that something is not right. Used when the shark is approaching its prey in most of the attacks, the music is played and grows faster the closer the shark moves to the victim. Once in the movie silence is used, this helps build tension, but at the same time makes you feel secure as you think the shark isn't coming. Suddenly

this is broken by the shark quickly appearing out of no-where with a loud noise to make the audience ‘ jump’.

This is used when Hooper gets lowered down into the water in a cage. The Director uses many camera techniques in the second attack. The second attack is when the young boy is attacked in the sea by the shark, and killed. These camera techniques are used to build up the tension and fear in the scene before the actual attack. The Director shows us Brody’s point of view- it shows the lower waists of people walking past, blocking his view of what is happening in the water, and only being able to see glimpses of what is happening.

The track is used to follow a particular character and to show their movements, this is used to show the boy walking along the beach to his mother, and he asks her if he is allowed to go into the water on his yellow lilo. Close ups are used to show a character’s facial expression and their reaction to what is happening. It is also used to exaggerate a certain thing and make it stand out, be it a facial expression or a single object in the midst of numerous others, or something less obvious if not pointed out. The close ups are used when Brody and some other characters are talking on the beach, they used a mid-shot- which is showing several characters relatively close together, usually talking- this then changes to close up of a character’s face showing their facial expression and reaction as they talk and hear what the other person has to say.

The Director used a long shot to show the whole beach and the hundreds of people that would witness the shark attacking and killing the boy. Zoom was

used when Brody sees that the boy is being attacked and when he realises what is happening, it was used to help exaggerate how Brody felt and with the shocked/scared facial expression reinforcing his expression. Finally an extreme close up is used to show the details of a specific object, such as in the autopsy later on, you see the damage caused by the shark and how big the teeth are bite is. With the first two attacks the Director shows just how powerful and dangerous the shark is. He makes the attacks very violent with lots of thrashing and blood.

This makes the audience more scared of the shark because of how powerful it is and how hard it would be to stop it. The Director also builds up fear of the shark using the music- as described before- Also in the earlier parts of the film the appearance of the shark is kept hidden, making it more mysterious-not knowing what it looks like or what type it is- making the audience have to use their imagination. This is used well in the first attack that takes place at night; you can hardly see what is going on except seeing wild thrashing and a little bit of splashing water, but loud screams are clearly heard. After the second attack Brody decides to research shark attacks and finds a book about them. In the book you see detailed pictures of the damage done to people's bodies after the attacks, there are pictures of people with half of their torsos bitten off and half a leg or limbs missing completely. The reaction of the characters are also used to show how big the shark is " we're gonna need a bigger boat.

" this makes us scared that they will be killed because the shark is actually bigger than their boat. The Director also uses false shark attacks to build fear, such as a woman screaming while being picked up, Brody couldn't see

it and thought she was being attacked. Another example is an old man is swimming with a black cap on, making you think it is the shark's fin but then you see him emerge from the water. Finally there were two kids that were swimming with a cardboard cut-out shark fin, this was help further because there were helicopters, and people on boats with guns looking for the shark or any sign of an attack. The Director uses the false attacks so that the audience don't get bored of the real shark attacks so they do no become mundane things that you get used to during the movie. It also helps make the real attacks scarier.

Tension is built up for the final attack by having a long time since the one before it. This builds tension and gives you the feeling that this is the 'big one'. In the attack on the forth of July however this involves Brody's son, Brody's son would be quite disturbed being so close to the attack, this also makes us feel sympathetic for Brody and makes us more worried for him in the last section of the movie when they actually go out and hunt the shark. In the last section of the movie, Hooper, Quinn and Brody sail out together and go to hunt the shark. As they sail of they film the boat leaving the dock through a set of shark jaws, this helps us remember tat they are going to hunt the shark and also build the fear that the shark could kill them. The fear and tension is built up more so by portraying Quinn as a madman, he refuses to call for back up and has very disturbing memories about his experience with sharks- such as after delivering the Hiroshima bomb, when they were stranded in the sea after the plane crashed, how 1100 people went into the water but only around 400 people were rescued, while the time before they were rescued he witness people being killed off and eaten one-by-one, also

he found the dead body of someone he knew floating in the water, he was killed by a shark- Hooper and Quinn were also comparing their wounds.

The first to see the shark properly was Brody -who is already scared of the sea- this makes Brody absolutely terrified, as he stumbles backward and says to Quinn the famous line “ We’re gonna need a bigger boat.” This is also used to show how big the shark is. Also the way the attack the shark build fear because they shoot at it and shoot harpoons with barrels of air in it and the shark is still moving strong and seems unaffected by them. When they start to run out of ideas Hooper volunteers to go into the water alone in a cage to try to give the shark a lethal injection that should kill it- but it can only be injecting in the it’s mouth as it’s skin is too tough to be penetrated- This is the part that uses the silence to build the tension and false sense of security that was discussed above.

When the shark goes to actually attack the Quinn and Brody who are still on the boat you see Quinn being eaten slowly, he is bitten at the waist and you see the shark biting down on him while blood is spewing out of his mouth and he is bleeding at the waist where he is being eaten. You also see that it appears that Quinn actually fears that he is going to be killed by the shark before he is swallowed. Then when Brody is left alone fear is built once again when the ship is starting to sink completely, you watch as Brody struggles to find places to stay out of the water, then you see the shark go to attack Brody and Brody is desperately throwing anything he can find at the shark, he manages to shove a gas bottle in the sharks mouth, the shark however continues to attack and Brody reaches for his rifle. He shoots at the shark, hitting him several times.

The shark breaks off his attack but then turns around and has another go, but Brody manages to get a shot at the gas canister, penetrating the pressurised bottle, it explodes and so does the shark. Brody is filled with relief and he falls into the water as the last of the boat sinks, bubbles appear near Brody, and you see Hooper emerge from the water. They rejoice, and you see as they make their way back to shore on a raft made from salvaged parts of the boat. Then the Credits roll.

The part I found most scary was in the final section when the shark is eating Quinn, this is because you see the shark the most and there is a greater amount of gore than in the other attack, also you see as he tries to escape the shark but finally get caught and bitten. He is still alive though and you can see him struggling and screaming in pain, but this also shows his refusal to be killed by a shark, which he has hunted for a better part of his life, but the shark eventually devours him completely.