

Gattaca – college essay



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As a society, each and every one of us possesses an inner strength that aids us to overcome the impediments in life that we may face. This inner strength is what we call our human spirit. In the film Gattaca directed by Andrew Niccol the power of the human spirit is exemplified as the prominent theme, presented through the characterisation of Vincent Freeman, the protagonist of the film. Vincent is a young man living in a world which discriminates against one's genes, and unfortunately for Vincent he possesses "Inferior Genes".

Through the verbal techniques of dialogue and narration and the visual features of camera angles and lighting Vincent's inferiority is exposed. Through some of these same techniques as well as the technique of music we see Vincent overcome his adversities and reach the dreams his genes had denied. The character of Vincent embodies the vital theme Niccol intends to leave with the audience - "There is no gene for the human spirit". It is during the early flash back sequences of the film we learn of Vincent's dream of space travel, and the genetic inferiority preventing him from reaching the stars.

Vincent was conceived through what we today know to be the conventional method, into a world where genetic engineering had become the norm. Dialogue is utilised by Andrew Niccol at Vincent's birth in order to establish his inferiority. At birth Vincent's cause of death and life expectancy is already predetermined through a small sample of his blood. "Heart condition, 99 percent probability. Early fatal potential. Life expectancy 30. 2 years". Succeeding his birth is a part of the flashback sequence where Niccol utilises camera angles to integrate the notion of Vincent's inferiority.

Visiting a kindergarten with his parents he is rejected due to his risk of injury. As the gate shuts, a close-up shot of the then young Vincent clutching the gate which appears to replicate the bars of a prison-cell reinforces Vincent being trapped by his genetic inferiority. Later in the flash back, and a few years passing in time Niccol again reinforces Vincent's adversities when it becomes clear he has a passion for space travel. Dialogue is used again when his own father rejects his son's dream, gesticulating " For Gods sake, you got to understand something.

The only way that you'd see an inside of a space ship was if you were cleaning it". The time spent establishing the hindrances Vincent faces helps to exemplify the idea of the power of the human spirit, for we learn albeit Vincent faces these difficulties his human spirit nether the less overpowers the adversity set against him. It is also during the flash back sequence that Niccol introduces Vincent's human spirit, the power of which is the pivotal theme of the film. Here the verbal technique of narration is used by Niccol to establish Vincent's inner strength and determination Vincent possesses.

Vincent and his superior genetically engineered brother, Anton swim out to sea in a competition. The brother who swam the furthest distance before turning back would win. In previous attempts Vincent would lose, due to his inferior genetic makeup being an antithesis to his brother's, however this time, Vincent was victorious. Through the technique of Vincent's voice-over narration he declares " It was the one time in our lives that my brother was not as strong as he believed, and I was not as weak - It was the moment that made everything else possible".

The technique of narration used by Niccol influences the audience to experience the fortitude in Vincent's voice and aids in establishing the beginnings of the human spirit resident within him that would eventuate to his reaching of the stars. As the film slips back into present time Niccol further exemplifies the theme of the human spirit through the character of Vincent as the film progresses. We are told that to reach his dream Vincent goes to the illegal extent of assuming another man's identity.

Using blood, urine and other bodily samples from the 'Elite' Jerome Morrow Vincent is accepted into the society of Gattaca. His human spirit is shown through scenes such as when he is on a treadmill. Due to his heart condition exercise to Vincent is overbearing, his pain can be seen when he leaves the exercise area only to collapse to the floor of the changing room with a pounding heart. He is willing to endure such struggle to find his dreams - epitomizing the human spirit.

During his time at Gattaca Niccol again further reminds the audience of his inferiority, to establish the power of the human spirit relative to the extent of hindrances Vincent faces. Lighting is used by Niccol during a scene where Vincent's real identity is threatened to be exposed. Hiding in the corner of the alleyway the shadow cast against Vincent's face again replicate that of prison bars. This again suggests Vincent remains trapped behind bars due to his genetic inferiority. By constantly reminding us Vincent's adversity Niccol heightens the theme regarding the power of the human spirit.

Albeit the adversities Vincent eventually overcomes these sentiments inferiority, and through the strength deemed to him through his human spirit

fulfils his aspiration of going into space. It is in the final sequence that Niccol utilises a conjunction of the techniques which exemplify Vincent's evident triumph, a success which his undying determination and human spirit has led him, set within the interior of a space shuttle. A close-up shot of Vincent's face indicate his realisation of his aspiration through the small tears that well up in his eyes.

This lays in conjunction with a low angled shot of the space rocket shooting up into space, as is Vincent shooting up to reach his dream. The triumphant music which plays in the background further accentuates Vincent's success due to his unwavering human spirit. All of these techniques utilised by Niccol help establish a truly inspirational sequence of scenes, for as the audience we realise the true power of the human spirit. We are filled with awe and jubilation for the victorious Vincent who now shot to the stars where his dreams had always laid.

The power of the human spirit is a pivotal theme in Andrew Niccol's film Gattaca. Illustrated through the characterisation of Vincent, and various production techniques which demonstrates the adversities faced by Vincent in regard to his genetic make-up and the human-spirit which enables him to defy the odds the audience is exposed to the true extent of just how powerful one's human spirit can be. We truly are able to see that there really is no gene for the human spirit. It is an inner strength that lies within each and every one of us, which makes even the impossible, possible.