

The music of forrest gump term paper example

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Forrest Gump, as a theatrical event, is the epitome of nostalgia. It speaks to the soul of a generation, helps another generation to understand their children, and educates another about the child- and young adulthood of the parents. A movie of such rich historical legacy has to the right music to capture, not just the mood, but the attitude of a generation. Some say that music is for the purpose of manipulation. Well, Forrest Gump is probably the best at manipulating an audience into believing in the miracle of the human heart.

Alan Silvestri used music in the film Forrest Gump in two ways. The first way Silvestri used music is to create a mood. The second way Silvestri used music in the film is by incorporating music that fit the setting. After viewing the movie and concentrating on the music, it appears that through music, Silvestri started with the message that most parents teach their children: Life is good. As children grow up and become adults, they discover that life can be hard. That message is reflected in some of the popular music used in the film. At the end of the film, the music sends the message that life can be good or that good times will come after the bad times. The central question about the music in Forrest Gump is: How did Alan Silvestri explain the time period using background music that vividly recalls the times?

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The opening music, known in this film as the Forrest Gump Suite, by Alan Silvestri, creates a soothing atmosphere (IMDB. com). While listening to the opening music, one feels that the music hints at a calm, pleasant, small town life that is perfect. Everything in life is good and nothing bad ever happens. The Suite continues as Gump discusses meeting Jenny as meeting Jenny is one of the best things to ever happen to Gump. Jenny is Gump's only childhood friend. She stands up for Gump and tries to protect Gump from the boys at school who want to be mean to Gump. Jenny continues to play an important role throughout Gump's life. The music that helps to introduce the relationship is mellow and triumphant. Forrest Gump is a winner for life. Silvestri's Suite changes to a triumphant feel as the braces on Gump's legs fall off while Gump is running away from the mean boys. The triumphant music continues as Gump becomes the runner of the football in college. Both the soothing music and the triumphant music show viewers that Gump never lets any life situation stop him from moving forward. After high school, Gump serves in the Vietnam War.

During the Vietnam War scenes, Silvestri introduces the popular music of the era. For example, the song playing while Gump is in the helicopter in Vietnam is Fortunate Son by Creedence Clearwater Revival. The contribution of this song captures the heart of American youth and anti-war sentiment. The rhythm is a classic rock and roll feel which was very important in that day. Rock and Roll was used as a political tool to fight against "the man" of that day. This song portrays the tragic reality of who fights for who in war. Its role in the movie is to pit the innocent and oblivious Forrest Gump against an enemy that he is not aware of: the man.

The songs playing during the rainy season in Vietnam are ironic and lend a sense of humor to a serious situation. One example is a song playing while the soldiers are scouting for the enemy in Vietnam in the pouring rain. The song is Have you Ever Seen the Rain by Creedence Clearwater Revival. Yes, the soldiers have seen the rain. On the less comical side, this song opens up the psychology of a generation of kids with happy-go-lucky songs, television shows and tunes. It's a generation that was put to sleep by the then media moguls of that day.

Another ironic song plays when the rain stops in Vietnam. The song is For What it's Worth by Buffalo Springfield. The song is ironic because Gump is narrating about how the rain stops and to illustrate this point, the lyrics of the song include the phrase "There's something happening here." Then the enemy attacks Gump's troop. Additional lyrics of For What is Worth that illustrate the scene include:

There's a man with a gun over there

Telling me I got to beware

I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound

Everybody look what's going down (Stlyrics. com).

In reality, that question should be directed at Gump. Does he even know what's going? It portrays more of the victim mentality of a generation.

Clearly the lyrics to this song illustrate how the soldiers hear the incoming gunfire and realize the situation facing them. The songs during the war scenes vividly illustrate the times because they are songs that were popular at the time of the real Vietnam War. The songs used in the war scenes are

clearly about the Vietnam War and the lyrics perfectly describe the scenes in Forrest Gump. Even though the songs were written decades before the film, the songs seem as if they could have been written specifically for Forrest Gump. These songs truly capture the nature and attitude of a generation. After the war when Gump is in Washington, D. C. to receive his medal of honor, he meets up with Jenny who has joined the hippie movement. Some of the songs playing during the hippie scenes include Mrs. Robinson performed by Simon & Garfunkel and Turn, Turn, Turn performed by The Byrds. The hippie movement is against the war and is in favor of peace and free love. Mrs. Robinson talks about how Jesus loves people which fits in with the hippie ideal of love.

The lyrics to Turn, Turn, Turn are reminiscent of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 from the Bible. The lyrics discuss how there is a time for everything such as being born, dying, killing, healing, loving, hating, a time for war, and a time for peace (lyricsmode. com). This song sums up the hippie era and popular cultures' opinion on the Vietnam War. The song takes place in Forrest Gump when Gump is saying goodbye to Jenny in Washington, D. C. as she leaves him once again. The song Turn, Turn, Turn serves a dual purpose of describing Gump's on again, off again relationship with Jenny and the culture of the times. The music of this era was so powerful and moving that it had to be used to further illustrate the tumultuous times.

A lighter tone in both the movie and the music occurs when Jenny comes home to Gump for awhile. Jenny and Gump laugh and dance around the yard to the tune Sweet Home Alabama, performed by Lynyrd Skynyrd. This song was first released in 1974 and has been a popular, feel-good song ever since

(imdb. com). The song fits into the movie's time frame as this scene takes place after Gump is home from the war. The lyrics to Sweet Home Alabama celebrate the state of Alabama where Gump lives and the song also celebrates the reunion of Gump and Jenny. Again, moving away from Gump the character this song also depicts the generation portrayed in the movie as a rock-and-roll-loving generation. They would stop in the middle of a gunfight to have a party.

Gump is lonely after Jenny leaves so he starts running across the country. The songs that play during his running scenes are ironic and humorous if viewers take time to pay attention. The song Running on Empty by Jackson Brown plays. This song makes sense as Gump feels empty after Jenny leaves. Another song playing during the running scenes is Go Your Own Way by Fleetwood Mac. This is funny as Gump is going his own way but yet people start to follow him and run behind him instead of going their own way in life. Another song that plays during the running scenes is Against the Wind by Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band. The song is appropriate for this part of Gump's life as he is trying to put Jenny behind him and the lyrics talk about trying to forget someone, living to run, running to live, and finding oneself far from home (lyricsfreak. com).

Alan Silvestri's theme song, The Forrest Gump Suite, plays again at the end of the movie creating soothing and comforting feelings in the viewer. Gump, without Jenny but having her child, is triumphant again. Silvestri is demonstrating that the story of the baby boomer is a long love story. The music conveys the idea that everything is going to be all right for Gump and his son. Yes, Gump and his son have been through a hard time losing Jenny.

Gump's common sense attitude and affection for his son will help both him and his son move forward. Using humor, sensitivity, and music from the time period depicted in the movie, Silvestri effectively utilizes background music to vividly recall those times.

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