

12 years a slave – scene investigation essay sample

[Life](#), [Relationships](#)



In the film “ 12 years a slave “ Steve McQueen the director is credited with several very effective scenes that draw the viewer in and magnify even subtle emotions. To successfully execute this McQueen made use of several camera and film techniques. The scene that shows Steve McQueen’s craft with a camera best is the scene where Solomon is begging Armsby to deliver a letter in secret and the shots that follow shortly after. A crucial technique in this scene is camera work. In the initial shot, the camera is angled upwards in a two shot featuring Solomon and Armsby. In this shot Armsby is higher up than Solomon showing authority. We feel like this shows authority because we often subconsciously associate looking up at someone with when we would look up to a teacher or parent as a child.

If we wanted something we would have to ask them, they could either do as we asked or not. Our parents were our signs of hope. But they also had the dominance in the relationship. This is a similar relationship to what Armsby has with Solomon. He is Solomon’s hope of escaping life as a slave yet he has total control in their relationship. We subconsciously assume all of this merely by the way that the angle is of the camera is placed to look up at Armsby and how he is placed higher up than Solomon. Before Solomon was dragged in to the life of a slave he was confident man who was very certain of himself and most of all he was full of integrity. The life of a slave managed to break him down to the point of begging. This shot allowed us to realise that being a slave had well and truly broken Solomon’s pride.

Shortly thereafter a shot follows where the “ NiggerBreaker” is asking Solomon if he asked Armsby to write him a letter in secrecy. In this shot The Nigger Breaker has his arm supportively over Solomon’s shoulder. This

makes the viewer feel on edge and very unsafe, the reason the viewer feels like this is because The Nigger Breaker becomes very unpredictable, he is very mad to hear about Solomon's betrayal yet he is holding his arm around him like a brother or good friend. The contrast of the two is what makes the viewer begin to feel uneasy, we develop an understanding that Solomon doesn't know how to act.