

"witness" analysis essay

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



The film "Witness", directed by Peter Weir, is about the traditional Amish life versus the violent ways of the Western World.

The film begins when an Amish boy named Samuel Lapp witnesses the murder of a policeman, and when detective John Book discovers it was an 'inside job' he gets shot and takes Samuel and his mother Rachel back to their Amish community. While nursing the bullet wound he stays with them for a week and learns the Amish way of life. He is not comfortable at first but he is eventually accepted by the Amish and falls in love along the way. One scene that captures the serenity and happiness of the Amish is the barn raising scene, which Weir uses to emphasize their supportive and community-minded ways and show that John Book has finally been accepted into their community. The scene also positions the viewers to recognize the developing love between John and Rachel. This film's proactive portrayal of the Amish would not be as vibrant without the barn raising scene which demonstrates that they are a helpful and loving community. Peter Weir achieves this by many well thought-out cinematographic techniques. The barn raising scene helps show how comfortable the Amish are with their old-fashioned, community-minded ways.

Techniques used in this film to show this include the long shots used to show that the whole Amish town is coming together to build a barn for a newlywed couple, and it is obvious by their smiling faces and enthusiasm that they feel happy and privileged to do so. The fact that the sky is so clear and beautiful is another way that Peter Weir has added to the joyous mood of the scene. It is also a way of showing the Amish community in a more positive light than the city culture, where Weir has chosen to film cloudy and

rainy days. Symbolic objects in the barn raising scene include the bright though plain clothes that the Amish are wearing, which are used to show what a joyous occasion this is, where the rest of the time their wardrobe consists of black and grey. While the Amish folk are wearing blue, purple and green clothes, John is shot wearing a white shirt, which is used to single him out from everyone else, though not in a negative way, as white is a symbol of goodness. The Amish are finally accepting John Book into their community which is shown using many different techniques progressively through the scene.

Another component in this scene is the way that John Book and the rest of the Amish community become pleasant towards each other, particularly Daniel and John. Daniel and John become friends as the scene progresses; this is shown when Daniel passes a glass of lemonade down to John, to share while they are both working. Eli, one of the elders of the Amish community, still does not approve of John, though only because it was obvious to him that John and Rachel are falling deeply in love. Another way of showing that John is becoming a part of their community is the low camera angles used projecting his image as a respectful carpenter as the scene carries on. Weir uses this technique to show that he is gaining respect as he helps them. An additional purpose of this scene is that it becomes clear that John and Rachel are treading in dangerous waters with their star-crossed love.

Cinematographic techniques used to establish their love in the scene involve camera shots flicking between their faces, as they stare openly with affection at each other.

Eli, one of the elders of the Amish community, does not approve of Rachel and her behaviour; for example, the look she gets from him when she serves John at the table before the elders is one of outrage to say the least. Halfway through the scene, an elderly lady approaches Rachel and asks her what she is doing with John, as she has heard people talking. Rachel pretends as though she does not know what is talking about. It is obvious that she and John are falling deeply in love, and they seem to be the only ones who do not care about the complications or the disapprove implicated by their impending relationship.

In summary, the barn raising scene is the pivotal part of this film in relation to how the Amish community is projected. The cinematographic techniques used effectively depict the mutual acceptance between John Book and the Amish, as do they with the forbidden love between Rachel and John.

Furthermore, this film positions viewers to see the Amish in a positive light, which is seldom portrayed in popular culture texts, and goes against general public perception. The community strength portrayed in this scene leaves an impressionable positive light for the Amish and will no doubt leave a lasting impact on the viewer.