

War of the worlds

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Steven Spielberg directed 'War of the Worlds' in 2005. He has transformed the original story written by H. G. Wells- in 1898- to a modern action sci-fi but still presenting the original message to the audience; that humans should not believe that they are the superior beings. Spielberg has adapted the story to appeal to a modern audience. He does this in various ways, such as, setting the story in America as they are now known as the superpower. Another way he does this is by including new up to date technology; an additional way he has updated it is by referring to the newly posed terrorist threat.

The sequence being used in this essay is chapter four- 'The Cylinder Unscrews' as named in the original book. At the beginning of the scene the main character, Ray played by Tom Cruise, approaches the cylinder. Spielberg uses de saturated colours at this point, to produce a warning and ominous atmosphere. To suggest that the people in the film feel confused Spielberg shows Ray and his two acquaintances discussing what they imagine is happening and the possibilities of what provoked it and what it could be.

The relevance of this conversation to what is happening is that the audience feel the same way; it continues the unknown and confused feeling Spielberg is attempting to create. It helps the audience relate to the film and how the people feel as it involves them in the feelings and thoughts because the audience as well does not yet know what it is or could be and can only guess. Another way Spielberg tries to create an anxious atmosphere is by using various camera shots such as; a mid-shot during the conversation so

that the audience concentrates on the three involved in the conversation; it includes the audience in the discussion.

He then goes on to use an Aerial shot of the many curious people gathering from every possible direction; the effect of this is that of tension. There are many people arriving and questioning, all standing around this 'hole' and the angles of the shots really pull the audience into the crowd so the audience are watching as if they are actually there and feeling their emotions and thinking their thoughts.

Throughout the gathering the camera's main focus isn't Ray, this is because he is not the hero and he is not significant in the film; he is just an ordinary person like every body else there showing that they are all the same in this situation and no one will be able to defeat the alien. Around the pit Spielberg helps to create an atmosphere of curiosity by closing in on the damage then adding dialogue from Ray-In this dialogue Ray picks up a piece of rock that is on the ground around the 'hole' he then mentions an unusual and unexpected answer to the question 'Is it hot? '.

His answer creates a confused and curious atmosphere, as he answers, 'No it is freezing cold'. Spielberg also adds a conversation between two officers, who direct the crowd away from the 'hole' so they are important in the crowd's sanity and they play an important part in keeping the crowd calm. When they are discussing what it could be and going through the possibilities, considering the obvious and not so obvious possibilities, this is significant as police are seen as figures of authority, power and knowledge- if

they are not sure of the reason then who will be- he shows them to be looked up to but clueless.

Another technique that Spielberg adds to elevate the tension is a sound effect of deep rumbling which fuels a number of thoughts and questions asked by the audience and the actors in the film. The reason this is ominous is because no one knows what this 'thing' is which confuses the audience and makes them think a lot more about the possibilities. The shots used consist of a birdseye view- of the damage, the pit and the crowd surrounding it- a high angle shot to make the people look small and helpless, these shots are used to show the crowd's fear and curiosity as the seconds to the climax of the scene become less and less.

The audience see this mass of people and the 'hole' in the ground and this suggests that people are investigating and trying to discover what is beneath them. Spielberg goes on to unnerve the audience and make them feel unprepared for the next bit by stopping the people and making them calm that settles the moment. The calming shots that are used consist of mid-shots of the crowd, close-ups on the 'hole' and high angle shots of the surrounding area.

As the scene continues the unpredicted parts following the gathering are very frantic and create a lot of chaos within the on screen world. The pit and the crack expand and spread over a wide diameter of land by first cracking and expanding then collapsing into the depths of the round sphere. The shots used as the crack moves and begins to destruct its surroundings are a

high angle shot- to demean the people and make them seem inferior and small compared to the thing that lingers below.

A birdseye view looking down on the people and the damage made is displayed next. The impression the damage and the deep rumbling noise makes of the 'thing' is that of a strong and powerful being. Spielberg then goes on to perform a change of the people's feelings from curious to fearful and confused by creating a scene of chaos and terror with the small inferior people running senselessly through the many surrounding streets, dodging in and out of the scattered cars and hiding curiously.

The shots used at this time are yet again birdseye, high angle and mid-shot. The shots used to show the ground cracking are close-up and high angle as when the close-up is used it follows the crack as if it is hunting and consuming all it runs into; the audience see the many feet fleeing the scene and from a close-up it elevates into a high-angle as the cracks power moves on from the ground onto the standing buildings that are surrounding it. The crack also shows its power by destroying the ever so powerful house of the God almighty.

This has an incredible significance to the power and strength of this thing emerging from below; it can also be seen from the view of religious people as a punishment from Lord God, almost like a payback for their sins. The fact that the church is being lit from the inside to the out shows the abnormality of this creature and what is going to happen. A silhouette is created showing the front of the church, slightly rotated and separated from the body. A high-angle shot also makes the church seem inferior. The falling of the spire

emphasises the deterioration of the faith that existed in the hearts of many when this ordeal first began.

At this point Ray and the other actors are fleeing the scene but they stop, being naturally curious they wait for whatever is below to emerge so they can be introduced and investigated. The audience's view is obstructed at this point to create tension and introduce the following part of the scene; the part where the alien emerges. The shot that is used to show the ground collapsing is a high-angled shot, used to make the people around look small and helpless and the hole seem large and powerful to introduce the alien. Smoke and fire emerges from the pit suggesting that the 'thing' below is destructive and alive.

The alien then throws a car out of the pit in a way that could be described as spitting it out; the shot used is a long shot. The fact that the alien can just throw a heavy car and a modern object out in the manner that it does shows that it is very strong and our technology is inferior to it and wouldn't pose a threat to it. After the alien has disposed of the car it begins to emerge. The first part the audience sees in the arm/leg of the 'thing' that is incredibly long and strong. The camera shot used as the leg jumps out of the hole is a long shot.

Creating a sense of mystery as it seems mechanical and its very long but people have no idea about what will be coming out of that hole and so suspense is high. Spielberg uses smoke then to carry on the element of mystery and with the smoke obscuring the audience's vision of the complete body of the alien Spielberg is able to add the tension. Other parts the

audience see as it slowly emerges are the 'head' and other legs, making them have to piece it together. The shots used whilst the audience views the various parts of the alien as it emerges are the usual suspects that consist of the favoured high angle, the long shot and the mid shot.

These shots are important as it shows the parts of the body in the most dramatically suspicious way possible; the shots are suited to the body parts and help to create the tension as the alien emerges from the pit. Whilst the alien is rising, the crowd and Ray stand amazed and confused as to its power and strength, still hiding but vulnerable to the unknown. The fact that Ray is standing in front of this machine instead of running shows that he is a disbelieving and enquiring character. As it rises there are a number of different angle shots. The angles of these shots are high and low.

He uses the low angle shots to emphasis the size of the large creature and shows the view of it from the crowd's view, which in most positions make it look immensely large, and he uses the high angle shots to compare the immense size of the alien to the small helpless insignificant people standing dazed below. As the alien is rising and begins to stand the pace rapidly increases from a sluggish tempo to a quicker speed. Spielberg does this to increase the tension and make the audience feel passionate about seeing the next bit and the parts to follow; it makes the audience anxious to watch on.

The music he uses to quicken the pace as well as get the audience's heart beating that little bit more, has a deep tone because deep toned music is generally associated with bad things and a warning it engages the audience,

they then prepare for a shocking following. The importance of the alien emerging from the crowd is that it makes the audience think and relate to as it has been below the ground for what has to have been for millions of years and not one person has noticed it. We can relate to this as we could also have undiscovered aliens below the ground, nobody knows.

The object's alien nature is emphasised by the fact that it has three legs, it's machine like and it moves by itself. The fact that it came from the ground and is so tall shows that it cannot be a human creation so it must be an extra terrestrial creature. The reaction of the crowd once they see the alien fully emerged and standing is one of the shock and confusion; they just stand there staring because they haven't seen this 'thing' before and they are almost paralysed by the sight, they have no idea the threat it poses or its next move.

Tension in this scene is built to a climax with the sound effects and various camera shots. The sound effect used as the alien's weapon deploys is one that sounds like something starting up like an engine. As this sound booms out, Spielberg creates a sense of chaos and panic by showing the people's face expression whilst also reflecting what they are looking at, showing the audience the cause and effect; the cause being the machine and the effect being the shock and panic expressed on the people's faces.

Another way he creates an effect being of panic is by having the people literally panicking on screen, running, shouting, screaming and generally acting fearful. As people run a camcorder falls to the ground; it is obvious that the man the audience saw holding it is now incinerated and the less

obvious is that it has defeated technology and no modern computers or up to date technology stand a chance against the machine.

A police man is then incinerated which is significant as the people that are seen as bullet proof and powerful are now being taken on and killed; it makes the crowd and the audience believe that very few will survive this experience. The audience are made to feel as if they are there by the shots and actions shown on screen; they get to see what other are seeing first hand almost like they are next to the people as they are reduced to ashes. As the film has been made to draw the audience into the experience, they can sense the desperation and imagine the thoughts as well as emotions as if they were there.

The death of a woman is then depicted with a close up of a fast deterioration of the body into small ashes; a close up is used to effectively make the audience feel as if they are running beside her, allowing them to see what is happening from a first hand view. The same way the woman was killed many others are too; she is incinerated by a beam of light/electricity and reduced to ruins. This is significant as it shows the power and the strength of this being as well as its incredible yet unknown weapons from another world.

Spielberg creates a sense of the alien being inescapable by showing it incinerating people running through the inside of shops and destroying the buildings; another way he makes it seem unavoidable is by showing it so large compared to the town and displaying its image as reflections in all glass surfaces. Ray/Cruise's reaction is one of fear. Other things the alien also destroys consist of cars buildings and other things such as trees etc. The

destruction is displayed using a selection of shots, ones that consist of high angled, low angled, close ups and mid shots.

The effect of these shots is again to help the audience see the destruction from all the views and involve them in every possible way. The symbolic significance of the people turning into ashes and buildings being destroyed can be seen as a connection to God, ash as in funerals (ashes to ashes, dust to dust...). The colours used in the end of this scene are saturated colours and unsaturated. The things that appear onscreen saturated consist of the fire made from the surrounding rubble and debris.

These colours are used here to emphasise the destruction and demolition. The audience after this sequence feel involved and attached, they want to watch on to see what will happen next. They can expect that in the rest of the film they will see more destruction, more aliens and a lot more chaos. Spielberg uses this sequence to prepare the audience for the following by giving them a basic introduction to the nature of the film, the action and destruction/devastation that is the basic outline of the film along with the aliens' destiny on earth.