

# A look at the errors in the film 300, directed by zack snyder

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300 is a movie directed by Zack Snyder and based on true events that took place in the B. C. era. It primarily focuses on the Battle of Thermopylae, a very important battle during the Greco-Persian War which took place during the second Persian invasion of Greece. Essentially, the film is fixated on the invasion of the ambitious King Xerxes of Persia into Greece with his huge army to extend his vast slave empire in the year 480 B. C. He was put in a situation to fight King Leonidas of the Spartans, whose army consisted of only 300 men, with Leonidas being completely outnumbered by Xerxes army of 150, 000 men. The title itself represents the number of men that fought for the Spartans, most likely used as to emphasize the greatness of power that the Spartans had with such a small army. This movie would definitely appeal to historians due to numerous historical inaccuracies that are present throughout the film. Essentially, I will be analyzing the film as a whole and comparing it to actual events that occurred during this time period.

There are many instances where historical inaccuracies are present throughout the film. Snyder seems to direct many negative traits towards the characters in the movie, causing audiences to view these characters negative as well. For instance, Xerxes, the Grandson of Cyrus the Great and loving husband of Esther, is depicted as an oversized drag queen, which is far from what he was in reality. Other times, it is clear that racism is existent within the casting of the film as Persians were depicted as Africans and Spartans were depicted as white. In reality, these roles were actually reversed and could easily anger audiences as they will inevitably express hatred towards African actors. In addition, King Leonidas' wife Gorgo was not portrayed accurately at all either. She was shown to be a woman who was

highly involved in politics, had sexual relations with men of the war council, and was shown to stab the members within the council, all actions that she did not commit in reality. Based on actuality, Gorgo was respected as the wife of Leonidas'. Clearly, it is evident that Snyder tried to implement these negative character traits simply for the sake of the film to engage audiences. If Gorgo was depicted exactly as the woman she was in reality, then the film could have gone in a different direction. The film also sparked some controversy as Persians were described as barbarians. Many Iranians believed the movie had racist intentions, which was falsified through the definitions of Greek roots. The Greeks used the word barbaros for any foreigner, from which the word barbarian derives. Therefore, it is clear that the use of the word barbarian was not a specific degradation or insult to the modern Iranian people. Lastly, a major inaccuracy in the film pertains to the depiction of the Persian army as "monsters". In the film, most of the enemy soldiers are deliberately made to be monstrous and non-human. Essentially, many other differences are present as the battle scenes are fabricated, the reasoning behind sending a small force is distorted, Persian army size is falsely depicted, chronology is incorrect, and equipment is shown differently.

The movie was released on March 9th, 2007 in North America and is based off of a graphic novel of the same name by Frank Miller. According to Zack Snyder, the only history that ties in with the movie involved the actual events that took place during the Battle of Thermopylae. There were no events that occurred during the production that resulted in the making of the movie, with the only inspiration pertaining to putting the graphic novel onto

the big screen. Overall, all the hype pertaining to this movie had to do with the graphic novel being made into a movie adaptation. As the graphic novel was highly successful, moviegoers raved about this movie constantly.

Zack Snyder was known to include many visual effects within the film to enhance the experience for audiences as well as other qualities to emphasize the emotion of the film. For example, the entire film was shot indoors against a blue screen as opposed to being filmed in other locations. In addition, lighting for the movie was reversed to allow for faster and efficient filming devised by cinematographer Larry Fong. Because the backgrounds of the movie were added later, neither the actors nor the camera had to move for this aspect of the movie. The film was shot on a soundstage with a total of 1300 effects used throughout the film. Certain scenes that involved horses were quite complicated as some of the riders depicted in the film were forced ride the horses up to the edge of the blue screen and skit to a stop. In regards to the music, the score of the film consisted of haunting vocals, with a chorus that seems to be chanting in either Latin or Hebrew. The film is narrated by a Spartan soldier by the name of Dilios, who is voiced by David Wenham. The use of narration in this film elaborates on the importance of the battle and the events that led up to it, again focusing on emotion as well. Essentially, the movie received an R-rating with spurting showers of blood, multiple decapitations, and stylized violence.

There are several historical books that are based on Thermopylae that could be compared to the film. The aftermath of the battle is depicted through a

book titled *The Histories*, by Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian which could easily be most prevalent due to the time period it was published. One of the best modern books that relates to the battle is *Gates of Fire* by Steven Pressfield, which is a fictional book that is mostly accurate but does take some poetic license. A book titled *The Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece* is a good, quick history of the decisive naval battle and *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* is another book by Victor Davis Hanson that discusses the cultural and historical significance of Salamis and the overall defeat of Xerxes. All these books, whether fiction or nonfiction, greatly relate to the film due to the connections to the Battle of Thermopylae.

There were a couple questions that were left unanswered throughout the film that I pondered about shortly after watching the movie. For instance, the movie was a little bit unclear on whether or not the Persians were ultimately able to defeat the larger Greek army in the end. I also wondered why the Persian Immortals were dressed up as ninjas. This was something that seemed a little irrelevant in context since the film failed to discuss this at all. However, I was able to figure out the answers to these questions through research as it allowed most of my confusion to clear up as a viewer. These questions should've been answered in the film since some audiences may or may not have any background information on the battle at all.

Compared to a written source, the film definitely depicts the characters much differently, which is something that is very common throughout the movie. For instance, the Persian army wasn't composed of monsters in

reality. In the film, many of the enemy soldiers are deliberately made to appear monstrous and non-human. Most of the battle scenes seem to be fabricated as the Spartans pay lip service to their proper formation, but abandon it for individual heroics at the earliest opportunity. There are many evident differences in Spartan motivation, the reason a small force was sent, Persian army size, chronology, and equipment. All these aspects are shown differently on the big screen compared to written sources.

Personally, I found this film to be excellent despite many historical inaccuracies that are present throughout the movie and also one of the best ancient war-depicted movie that I have ever seen. The use of visual effects and editing techniques have left many viewers, including, in awe. The film focuses more on the viewer's emotion than reason due to these visual effects and is successful in conveying the main message of the film. I found the main message of the film to be accurate, that 300 Spartans were forced to fight against a much army of Persians, and even though each and every Spartan died in the end, they took many more Persians with them. The first time I saw this film, I felt as if I was actually back in that time period through the extensive and realistic use of visual effects. The film depicted lots of emotion as audiences will most definitely form a bond with King Leonidas and the Spartans. It is clear that this movie has multiple genres including action, adventure, fantasy and history. It shows the strength, loyalty, and courage of ancient Greeks against the Persians in 480 B. C. Unlike other films such as Braveheart and The Patriot, it is the clear that this movie cannot pretend to look 100% accurate. What I find to be very distressing about this

movie is the realization of the tremendous power Hollywood wields in determining the identity of the films characters. I would definitely give this movie 3 out of 5 stars since I found it to be very moving and emotional regardless of how many historical inaccuracies there may be throughout the film. I would recommend this movie to anyone who is interested in seeing a Hollywood depiction of a historical battle that not even books could achieve a representation of.