

# Compare the film techniques sequences of 'the longest day'

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The D-day landings at Omaha Beach in reality were a bungled slaughter which caused the lives of thousands of soldiers. Films, 'The Longest Day' And 'Saving Private Ryan', try to capture this horrific moment on film. Each film different to the other. In this essay I will compare the techniques used in the two films in presenting a real event, and at the same time making it dramatic and exciting for an audience. I will also examine the differences in presenting the film and the cinematic advances used. D-day took place on June 6th 1944. It was nicknamed 'Operation Overlord'.

The aim of D-day was to liberate Northern France from German rule. The D-day landings took place at different beaches all over Northern France. Famous beaches like Utah, Sword, Gold and Juno were landing sites, but the beach Hollywood concentrated on was Omaha Beach. The allies which landed at Omaha Beach consisted of British and American soldiers. Trying to defend the landing site at Omaha was one of Germany's best, (or the best), commanders Rommel. Rommel had proved that he was a deadly and an excellent commander during the Battle of the Desert in Egypt.

Rommel's main aim was to keep hold of Omaha Beach under any circumstances and had focused his best trained men there. When the allies landed at Omaha Beach, the allies were slaughtered. Stationed gunmen with deadly machineguns shot wave upon wave of soldiers as they just came out of the landing crafts! It took a full day to eventually capture the beach which the allies did, but doing so lost thousands of troops. This is the reason why the film 'The Longest' has its title as that, as it took the allies a long, full day to liberate Northern France from German rule.

The Longest Day is like many Hollywood films which were produced 10-20 years after the war. The reason being is that it is shot in black and white which allows the producer to insert real war footage, which is easily noticeable. The Longest Day starts with uplifting, heroic military music. A brief caption appears on the screen reading: " Omaha Beach 06: 32 hours" This is to let the audience know of where the scene is set. The next scene shows landing crafts heading towards the beach. The weather is fine and the sea is calm.

In real-life the weather was terrible and the sea was very rough. As the landing craft approach Omaha Beach, the main character played by Robert Mitchum, who like many members of the cast was involved in the war, says, " There it is men, Omaha Beach, dead ahead. " Mitchum isn't really saying this to the troops, but to the audience to inform them of the coming scene. As they land on the beach the landing craft comes down and the soldiers charge onto the beach. The music is still 'heroic' uplifting music and cheering can be heard from the troops.

One person gets killed cleanly. Nothing happens - no body parts are shown being flayed, he just drops down clutching his stomach and gives a slight moan - no gory parts are shown. In the action scene no chaos is shown, there are no bullets shot and not a lot of people get killed, which was not true in the real D-day landings. Mitchum is then showed leading the troops forward. The director uses a tracking shot to follow him on the beach. This unfortunately distances him from the action. While the camera follows him, the scene is very spectacular and fantasy-like.

Hardly anyone gets killed and the troops make an easy run towards the enemy. All these points make *The Longest Day* a type of post-war propaganda movie. Next there is an interchange which is there to show Mitchum as a hero - 'stick with him and you survive'. But it is also there to tell the audience that it is real bad out on the battlefield, but the scene fails to deliver. To make the film more authentic the director used the real Omaha Beach for the battle scenes. Original landing crafts were used and not computer graphics like in *Saving Private Ryan*.

Many of the costumes worn were original uniforms from World War 2. All this was done to ensure maximum authenticity. Also in the film German actors are used who speak in the German language instead of English. This adds to the authenticity and tries to make the film balanced by showing both sides. *Saving Private Ryan* is a completely different film although it is showing the same thing. *Saving Private Ryan* starts like *The Longest Day* with a caption informing the audience of the coming scene.

The screen reads: June 6th 1944 - Dog Green Sector, Omaha Beach" This time however there is no music but sounds but sounds of the dreadful weather, the rough sea and the soldiers vomiting. As the landing craft approaches the beach, the weather is dreadful and the sea is very rough. The soldiers in the landing crafts look worried and are vomiting due to sea-sickness. The main star in the film - 'Tom Hanks' is shown shivering himself instead of being shown like a 'television hero'. Tom hanks plays the same role as Robert Mitchum but plays the same role very differently.

Hanks then shouts orders to his troops unlike Mitchum who just casually says, " there it is men, Omaha Beach, dead ahead. " As the landing crafts come down most of them men in the boats get slaughtered in seconds by the machine-gunners. A hand-held camera is used to film the scene in the boat and as the men are shot, blood splatters onto the lens making the audience feel as if they were there. As the troops proceed towards the beach, a hand-held camera is used again, whizzing around making the audience slap bang in the middle of the action scene, making them feel as if it is going all around them.

Special effects are used to show chunks of people flying on the beach and men lying on the beach with their guts hanging out. However this is true of what really happened. Not only director, Steven Spielberg's visual effects are spectacular but he also used sound effects to shock the audience. Bullet sounds are heard flying through the air hitting people and objects. Screams of dying men are also, the tide rolling in and out and of course the 'boom' of deadly explosions makes the audience again feel as if it is going all around them.

All the points above make Saving Private Ryan an anti-war, documentary type film rather than the positive-war films Hollywood had been releasing since decades. The German soldiers are not actually shown in the film, but Spielberg shows them as shadowy faceless observers to make the film scarier and chaotic. In Saving Private Ryan the beach scenes were not shot on the actual Omaha Beach, due to the authorities not letting them film on

the real beach, but on beaches in Ireland. The landing craft used were computer generated and not real ones.

The costumes used were replicas of the uniforms used in World War 2 and look very authentic. In conclusion to this essay I have found out that both films, with the use of different techniques are successful in presenting the D-day landings to an audience. Saving Private Ryan does this through a gritty and realistic version, which shows what the war was really like. Whereas The Longest Day does this through a positive-war film which shows the allies winning the war in true Hollywood style.