

**'strangers on a train'
analyse the
effectiveness essay**



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

' Strangers On A Train' is a film from the thriller genre. One of the key elements of a thriller film is the creation of suspense. Using a variety of film techniques such as camera angles, lighting, sound and music, special effects, comedy and symbolism can create this suspense. Hitchcock uses camera angles very effectively in a variety of ways.

He draws our attention to certain significant objects that will be important later on in the story such as Bruno's tiepin when he is introducing himself to Guy. This will be the object that Anne recognises later on in the film that tells her Guy knows Bruno even though he said he did not. Focus is put on Guy's lighter with the inscription ' A to G' at this first meeting as this will be a main point of suspense later on in the film as Bruno threatens to plant it at the scene of the crime in order to incriminate Guy. The technique used to create this focus is a zoom. This zoom usually involves the camera starting at MS or MLS position and finishing at BCU or ECU. This effect can also be described as a crash zoom.

When the camera is placed underneath an object looking up at it, also known as a Low Angle Shot; it can make the object appear intimidating or overpowering to the audience. A perfect example of this is when Guy is at Bruno's house and the audience are being lead to believe he is planning on shooting Mr Anthony. As Guy reaches the bottom of the staircase and the camera focuses on the dog sitting at the top of the stairway. The camera has the same view as Guy so the audience gets the idea Guy is feeling intimidated by the dog.

When the camera is spinning round at a fast pace it can create the illusion of confusion or disorientation. This method comes into practise when Bruno and Guy are both on the carousel, after the policeman has shot the fairground worker. The carousel is spinning round out of control and the camera which is on the carousel also spins round to emphasise the danger as the men are punching each other and Bruno is trying to push Guy off the ride. When the camera is off the carousel looking at it in the same scene it has a tilted frame, which is another technique with the intention of generating confusion and disorientation. When the camera is placed looking over a character's shoulder at another character during a dialogue the viewer can gauge the interviewee's reactions to what has been said to him or her by the interviewer.

Examples of this technique can be found throughout the film in almost any dialogue between two characters. When Guy is out walking with the Mr Hennessy he sees Bruno in the distance. Instead of Hitchcock using a Close-Up to focus on Bruno, a Very Long Shot is used. This gives the impression that Bruno is in the background, threatening him. When Bruno has entered the fairground when he is intending to plant Guy's lighter the camera has an overhead view of the entrance.

The audience can see Guy rushing forward while everyone else is sauntering round. This gives the audience the impression that Bruno is in a hurry to plant the lighter before Guy can stop him. This type of overhead shot is called a High Angle Shot and can give the audience an idea of the whole scene rather than just a small section. When Bruno is committing the murder the audience do not actually see the murder as it happens.

<https://assignbuster.com/strangers-on-a-train-analyse-the-effectiveness-essay/>

Instead the murder is shown as a reflection in Miriam's glasses. This in a way takes away the horror of the murder for the viewer. Lighting can also play a part in the creation of suspense. Another function of lighting can be to convey an idea.

An example of Hitchcock conveying a certain idea is the use of soft lighting for Anne. Anne is given this soft lighting because she is the love interest in this film and its use enhances her beauty. Shadows can imply a character is guilty or has a darker side, like when Bruno and Guy are talking on the train and the shadows from the blinds fall across Bruno's face. A focus on the shadows of object or people can be used to create tension and suspense because of the lack of clarity in the image. This technique can often be used to lead the audience to believe something different to what has really happened or is about to happen. An instance where this happens is at the fairground in the 'Tunnel of Love' where the viewers are lead to believe that Bruno has murdered Miriam after the shot of the shadows of Bruno's boat catching up with Miriam's and a scream is heard.

This then leads to an anticlimax as the audience finds out that Miriam and the other men are just playing. Sound and music can be used to create atmosphere or moods. Tension can be created by the gradual build up of a piece of music either by increasing the volume or adding more and more instruments until lots of instruments can all be heard playing at once for example when Guy and Miriam are arguing in the booth and there ends up being a whole orchestra playing. When a piece of music ends it can bring about an anticlimax.

Sound can also be made to overpower dialogue or force the character with the dialogue to shout, an example of this being when Guy is speaking to Anne on the phone in the train station and he has to shout over the noise of a train pulling into the station. The dialogue he is being made to shout is ' I could strangle her.' Referring to his wife, Miriam. The noise of the train also reminds the viewer of the conversation Guy had with Bruno earlier on the train in which Bruno tells Guy of his plans for the perfect murder. This is another example of the use of sound and music.

Another example of this use is when Bruno hears fairground music in his head every time he sees Barbara because she is so similar looking to Miriam. Special effects are not used often in this film because at the time of production the technology was not around for the use of these effects. There is one instance though, where slow motion is used. This occurs when Guy is moving towards the dog at the top of the stairs. This drags out the scene and therefore creates a tense atmosphere and leads the audience to believe he is going to be attacked by the dog. The tension is broken when the dog licks Guy's outstretched hand.

Comedy is also needed in the thriller genre as it lightens the mood in the appropriate places and prevents the film from turning into a horror film, which is very important. Examples of comedy being used in this manner can be found throughout the film, one instance being when the fairground worker is under the carousel, in a life or death situation, and he stops to wipe his nose. Another of these examples is when Bruno is on his way to the island at the fairground where he is going to plant Guy's lighter. There is a tension not knowing whether Guy will stop him in time but the tension is momentarily

<https://assignbuster.com/strangers-on-a-train-analyse-the-effectiveness-essay/>

broken when Bruno bursts a small child's balloon with his cigarette. This is a film in which a lot of symbolism is used to hint to the audience ideas that will unfold later on in the plot.

At the start of the film the viewer sees the criss-crossing of the train tracks, this symbolises the criss-crossing of the murders that the film's plot revolves around. This is an example of where the viewers are being shown something that refers to something else later on in the film. In conclusion, Hitchcock has taken a wide variety of film techniques and has exploited them to make it easier for the people viewing the film to distinguish what parts of the film are meant to be tense and which are meant to be funny etc. By using these techniques Hitchcock makes his ideas and visions of the film clear for the viewer to interpret.