

# "modern times" short critique assignment

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Elaine Woo " Modern Times" short critique The movie ' Modern Times' (1936), directed by and starring Charlie Chaplin, was set during the Great Depression and industrial revolution period, where machines and technology were starting to dominate humanity, which led to severe unemployment and poverty. Machines were also served as a method to illustrate how people are supposed to deal with fast-paced living, when factories were starting to use machines and technology as their main ways to produce, and human labour were just assisting machines.

There is no traditional voice dialogue in the silent movie, but voices and sounds do emanate from machines, television screens in the factory, telephones etc. Every time a person talks, he/she spoke through machines instead of through direct speech or face-to-face conversations. Examples include scenes shot in the factory, where the orders of the manager were delivered through the video screen from his office. This also demonstrated that technologies were slowly replacing human basic functions, such as communication skills.

Another example of technology dominating over human race is the scene where the ' feeding machine' was introduced. The functions of the feeding machine replaced the human function of eating, drinking; it even helped people to wipe their mouths. The scene where Charlie Chaplin got sucked into the machine wheels metaphorically implied the combination of machinery and humanity. These scenes proved that humans are gradually turning into machines in the modern world, illustrated graphically. Machines exemplified American's obsession with time and automation, and also class distinction.

Time is very momentous during the Great Depression because production is very vital, which is why there was a clock at the background at the beginning of the movie, and that workers have to use punch cards to record time.

These elements all increased the significance of 'time'. The flattening of the timepiece might also suggest that time was never enough because workload was always too heavy? During the scene where Charlie Chaplin was working in the factory with his colleagues, audiences can see that the workers' repetitive mechanical actions were machine-like, suggesting that jobs in society that time were non-fulfilling, and there were no satisfaction. The way that people have to deal with this fast-paced, hectic life led to nervous breakdowns, Charlie Chaplin portrayed this in the scene where he broke down and had to be hospitalised. The toilet scene where Chaplin was taking a smoke-break in the toilet and the manager appeared in the video screen showed audiences that people were frequently under machine surveillance during communist times, this is aligned with 'control' and freedom was considered as a luxury.

Charlie Chaplin utilises machines and humorous ways, such as dorky actions and mechanical movements in this silent comedy to react towards serious topics and social issues in the movie, also criticizing the rapid and increasing influence of machinery. In the movie, machinery was treated as a means to comment on the efficiencies of modern industrialisation and the economic situations people were facing during the depression.