

Analyse the opening scene of billy elliot and discuss how the director uses media...

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The opening scene of Billy Elliot introduces the main character of the movie and gives the audience a taster of what is to come. Just like an interesting start to a book, this opening hooks the audience, and they want to know what is going to happen to the character. During the movie, we see Billy transform from a boxing boy to a ballet boy, but he faces many challenges along the way, particularly between his father and brother, Tony. But once he takes up ballet, he discovers he enjoys it, and we get to see him go from strength to strength. In this essay I aim to analyse how Stephen Daldry uses media techniques to introduce the character in an exciting way to 'hook' his audience.

When the film opens, we see a hand placing a record on to a record player. Since it is a close up shot on the camera, we do not know who it is. Until it shows Billy Elliot jumping up and down on the bed. The effect of using the close up on the hand placing the record and needle makes the audience want to find out about the person who is playing the record. The way the record is placed down and held is very gingerly, as if the person shouldn't be using it or should be very careful when using it.

This could mean that objects are very special in the household. Or that the person handling the record has a very caring personality. When the record begins to play (Cosmic Dancer by Marc Bolan), we see Billy jumping up and down on the bed doing different movements every time he comes into shot. The effect of using slow-motion when Billy is jumping is cleverly used by Daldry. He has set up the camera at different angles and distances so

sometimes we can only see his face, his torso, his legs and finally the full body.

The reason for using the distance, angles and slow-motion could be so we, the audience, can see Billy for the first time and make assumptions about him, such as his background from the wallpaper, his personality and characteristics. These assumptions would be what Billy's personality is like, someone with energy and enthusiasm yet perhaps someone lonely as he is by himself. Judging from the wall paper there is the suggestion that it would be a poor background that he comes from. When Billy is jumping, most of the camera shots are close ups on Billy's face. Daldry has chosen to film Billy this way to show the audience the excitement and thrill and emotions during this song.

The reason Daldry has chosen to play Cosmic Dancer at the beginning of the movie is to portray Billy's emotions by the lyrics in the song and the movements Billy uses in the air. It has a lot of meaning for Billy. The boy twitches and leaps and spins involuntarily, and it's easy to get swept up in his infectious joy. You can't stop yourself from not dancing along with him, the way he dances and jumps makes you feel better for some reason and I think that is what Stephen was aiming to do. After Billy has finished dancing on his bed, we cut to the Elliot kitchen. It is very cramped and by the looks of it, Billy has a lot of responsibilities for a 12 year old boy.

The way he moves around the kitchen and uses the utensils and kitchenware in such a well-rehearsed and familiar manner hints at a familiarity borne

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from frequent use. He makes breakfast and then goes to a room just out of the kitchen, but the bed is empty. He runs out of the house in search of whoever has gone missing. When he is running, we see for the first time the scenery of Everington, where Billy lives. The director uses a tracking shot to follow Billy down the street and a long shot to show us what kind of place the Elliot's live in. It isn't the part of Durham you would expect a boy to take up ballet or even have this much responsibility.

It is a traditional community with traditional values, where 'men are expected to be men' and boys are expected to follow in their father's footsteps, most likely down the pit. Once we have seen the kitchen, we can tell that there is no one to clean, cook, look after Billy, and do everything that a house wife would traditionally do in that community. Perhaps this is where there is a hint of loneliness or sadness stemming from the lack of a mother on the scene. At this point there is no explanation of no mother which again may be a technique by Daldry to give the character a little mystery and more depth. Billy comes across a field and finds his Nana walking down a path and takes her home. When Billy and his Nana are walking down the path, we can see the miners and the striking miners.

The reason the director has shown this could be to give us an idea of what is happening around Billy. This could mean that this is where Billy's father and Tony are. It shows that Billy is different to his Father and Tony; he cares for his Nana, and is in his own little world when he is dancing. Billy is very different to the rest of his family, by the way Billy acts, the way is facial

features are used and his body language. When he is jumping up and down on the bed, his facial features are very energetic.

He is ecstatic and extremely happy. His body language is very large and significant. He is like a rabbit with a million carrots. The Elliot's house is very cramped. The washing is hanging in the kitchen, the hallway is very small, and only one person could pass down it at a time.

From the size of the house and the state it is in, we can tell that there is obviously no one to clean it and that there is not enough money in the Elliot household. When we are in the kitchen in the first scene, the camera is following Billy around the kitchen doing his daily routines. The camera is stationary, apart from when he looks in his Grandma's room for her. The camera angle is a medium shot of Billy and the kitchen. Billy's life is very hard and is a struggle most days. He has more responsibilities than the average 12 year old boy, he cooks the breakfast, he takes care of his Nana, he cleans the house regularly, and on top of that, he'll have homework from school, practising his ballet privately so his family doesn't know about it, particularly his father.

The ballet is obviously very important to Billy as we find out later in the movie, but the first time you see Billy, you wouldn't expect him to be the kind of boy to take a liking to ballet. You wouldn't expect a boy like Billy to do ballet because of his background. His father is a miner, as is Tony, and it probably runs in the family. From the first look at him, you would expect him to be a tough child doing boxing and other sports that men only did back in

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the 80's. You would expect a boy from an upper class family with more money to do ballet because if people found out that Billy had been doing ballet he would most probably get ridiculed at school.

In conclusion, I quite enjoyed Billy Elliot, although I would like to know more about his mother, and how she died, because it could be interesting to see how Billy, Tony, their father and Nana would have coped without her then and what Billy would have been like if she was still with him. The construction of the character is very good. The opening scene is very effective. It gives you an idea of what is to come through out the movie and makes you want to know more about the boy, what he is really like. All we can tell from the opening is that he cares for his Nana, has a lot of responsibilities, and is ecstatic when he is dancing. It may have been interesting if Daldry had shown a glimpse of Tony or his father somewhere in the house, to see how he is different to the rest of the males in the family or if he hides his ' true' personality.