

Portryal of andy as a  
symbol of hope in  
shawshank  
redemption essay



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In 1994, Frank Darabont's film 'The Shawshank Redemption' received a poor reception when released; it only made a \$0.3m profit. More recently the film has become known as one of the greatest movies of all time, it has inspired hope in many people, helping them to lose weight, leave abusive marriages and such like. The film is based mainly upon two convicts, and the idea of hope. Andy Dufresne is a 'Hot Shot Banker' imprisoned with two life sentences, for the suspected murder of his wife and her lover and 'Red' (Morgan Freeman) whom Andy redeems hope in, along with the other convicts, saving them from institutionalisation.

One of the ways in which Andy saves himself is by making projects for himself. The first thing that Andy does is to make little sculptures using a tiny rock hammer, although this seems a very small thing as an attempt to save him, the impact it has on Andy is miraculous. Darabont has very cleverly shown us the way in which Andy suddenly changes from a man with an introverted character; that blends into the background, to a man who takes on an inspirational role towards others in Shawshank.

The next project Andy undertakes is very much a more intense one, he recognises the potential of the library in the prison, and he puts it upon himself to write letters every week for six years to the Education Board, requesting funds for the library, the other convicts in the prison think that Andy is being obsessive and unrealistic. Although this is one of the key points in the film where Andy realises that there is possibility for him and that hope is a good thing.

The library then reflects this and creates a positive environment that is a beacon of hope for the prison community. Several friendships are formed in the film, particularly through conversation, focused on the main relationship between Andy and Red. The conversations that the two men share really emphasises the closeness of the bond that they have formed. Frank Darabont directly introduces the idea of hope through the emotions that are expressed to each other.

These dialogues are often filmed in a two-shot; this portrays the attachment that the men have formed. Red is very reluctant to accept hope, even stating in the film ' Hope is a dangerous thing; hope can drive a man insane' and this is expressed through shadows cast on him whilst Andy is shown in the light. This idea of hopelessness exaggerates the redemption of hope expressed later on in the film, an example of this is right at the very start of the film when the man is beaten so badly by the prison guards that he dies, Andy's asks a key question that nobody can answer; ' What was his name? '. This hopelessness is then contrasted when the friendships are formed later on in the film, when everybody becomes close, which is confirmed when Andy bargains with the guards and consequently wins three bottles of beer for each of his work mates. Andy's friends and he are regularly shown laughing together or helping one another to cope, Darabont successfully reflects hope into the eyes of the viewer through these friendships.

Gestures such as the harmonica illuminate this point when Red begins to create music. Music is constantly used in the film as an icon of hope; it is used throughout the whole film in various different ways, to express and exaggerate different emotions that the characters are feeling. We are able to <https://assignbuster.com/portrayal-of-andy-as-a-symbol-of-hope-in-shawshank-redemption-essay/>

track the change of emotions and the feelings towards the idea of hope that the convicts in Shawshank have, making the build up of hope increasingly noticeable to the viewer.

The main use of Music is when Andy receives packages from the Board of Education, he plays Mozart's 'The Marriage of Figaro' over the loudspeaker system to the whole prison. Camera angles are used effectively by Darabont in this scene; it shows how much the music affects the men of Shawshank, the shot emphasises the mass number of people the music influences. In this clip Red narrates 'Every last man in Shawshank felt free'; this really portrays the emotion shown in the scene, however this scene is shortly followed by Andy having to endure two months in the hole.

Endurance is one of Andy's strongest characteristics, and it is one of the key features Darabont picks up on to enhance the ideology of hope, he uses the way Andy takes tasks under his belt and works at them. He perseveres through everything that is thrown his way, because he has hope in himself. When he plays the music to the prison, he is determined to keep playing it, even though the guards are shouting at him to stop.

Even after this, when he is in the hole, he endures it and when he is eventually released he comments that it was the best time he ever did, and he says 'I had Mr Mozart to keep me company'. This positive attitude that he is showing to his friends is inspiring hope in themselves not just him, he is leading them away from institutionalisation through perseverance and determination, through showing them his hope and through his leadership

role. His leadership shows symbolism towards the leadership of Jesus, it is possibly the main way in which he is shown as a hope icon in the prison.

Andy is mostly shot in lit areas, even during his times in the hole, he is in the light it is often contrasted with darkness to exaggerate this. To Christians Jesus is known as 'the light of the World', could the way Frank Darabont films Andy in the light hold reference to this, is Andy the light of Shawshank? Many of the Religious Symbolisms are really amplified in the escape scene, when Andy exits the sewage pipe this is when we can easily notice the way he is shown as similar to Jesus.

He is immediately in a pool of clean water, this could represent cleansing and purity, here again he is also shown with moonlight streaming down upon him conquering the darkness. The nakedness in this scene is used together with the nakedness at the beginning of the film entering Shawshank, in both clips he has turned his back on the old and started new, this nakedness could also represent cleansing similar to that of the water.

Additionally the angle that Darabont uses to film him gives the impression that Andy is standing in the shape of a cross, a cross holds many symbolic meanings, but the main one being the resurrection, has Andy been resurrected, bought to a brand new life? Also, when the prison guards go to Andy's cell, they roll back the cell door to reveal that Andy has gone, is this equally comparable with the Easter story and the women rolling back Jesus' tomb?

The final scene of the film, a silent long shot of Andy and Red on the beach; 'The place with no memories', this juxtaposition of the island and the prison

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shows us the importance of hope. Darabont has succeeded to make sure that the film concludes with all ideas of hope brought together in the film's ending, the lighting, the mise-en-scene, silence and the contrast to the whole film accentuates the strength of the friendship and the way hope has influenced the two men, ending on Red's final dialogue ' I Hope'.