

"the beauty that
addresses itself to the
eyes



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

" The beauty that addresses itself to the eyes is only the spell of the moment; the eye of the body is not always that of the soul." George Sand hit the nail right on the head when he said this in 1872. Appearance versus reality has been a central theme in many American creative works including the film American Beauty. American Beauty is a film that looks into your typical, middle-class suburban American home and slowly uncovers all of the abnormalities that lie within. The family is portrayed as normal but as the films tag line suggests " look closer" then it is possible to fully understand the implications that takes place in this seemingly happy home. The film is masterfully directed by the famous theater director Sam Mendes and encompasses a great number of cinematic techniques that appear fresh and exciting.

Sam Mendes effectively uses the color red; as a central motif to heighten mood and theme, to contrast families, and to reveal characters personalities and feelings. In American culture red is a color of various meanings and images. The color red is the essence of life; it is the color of blood. It can imply energy, vitality, passion, anger, power, excitement, and sacrifice. It is a grounding color. Red can stand for warmth, danger, love, sex, death, rage, lust, and beauty (Behm 15).

Red is the color used for the women's clothing, the cars, the doors and also it is the color of Lester's blood splattered across the white table at the end of the movie. Red is the central motif of the film. Sam Mendes incorporated many of these meaning of red within the film American Beauty. Not only did Sam Mendes implant a motif of red, he also incorporated a motif of the red rose. Roses in American culture are the ultimate symbol of love, life and

death. Flowers are a large part of the American culture. They have come to symbolize compassion, caring and love.

The beauty of rose is covered with danger, for they have thorns that can pierce. Roses symbolize beauty; perhaps that is why they chose the title American Beauty. The title American Beauty is an assortment of symbolism; it encompasses a variety of meanings. For the viewer it can stand for the American beauty rose, a rare and antique climbing rose, much like the roses in the Burnham garden.

It can also represent the ideal American woman such as Angela, with her long flowing blonde hair, her porcelain complexion and her ruby red lips and bright blue eyes. Another adaptation of the title is the beauty of a perfect American home much like the Burnham's home appears to be. But all have flaws, the rose has thorns to prick, Angela has her fear of being ordinary; and the Burnham's home, well it too is cursed with the reality that they are a dysfunctional family. Red roses become not only a motif in the film; they come to represent symbols.

They are prevalent in almost every scene. They are in the garden; almost every room in the house has a bouquet of brightly colored roses in a vase. They are the centerpieces to the dining room table. This table becomes a motif in the film as well, the family has its nightly dinner ritual and over the course of the movie we see a delineation of the family at this table. Rose petals are the symbol of sex also, they are seen surrounding Angela, they burst out of her blouse, they pop out of Lesters mouth after he fantasizes of

kissing her and they fall from the ceiling onto his face when he pictures her above his bed.

The front door to the house becomes a motif as well, with constant references from neighbors about the house with the red door. As if the door is a gateway to the oddities lurking inside the house. Within the house Mendes restricted the colors to a monochromatic blue-gray scheme to emphasize the isolation between the Burnham's. Lester escapes from this cold and lonely house by creating a domain for himself, it is framed in golden browns, and this separates him even further from the blue-gray