

Racism and prejudice assignment

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mississippi Burning ??? Analytical Essay “ Mississippi Burning”, directed by Allan Parker, is set in the state of Mississippi, 1964. In this film, Parker shows that he feels sorry for black people, by strongly portraying the levels of racism and injustice towards negroes, which was implemented by white people (the Ku Klux Klan in particular) within the state. The Ku Klux Klan was a group of white people who believed that negroes were filth, and that they didn't deserve to live equally among white people: “ We want beautiful babies, not ones with brown faces”.

They conveyed their message through strong acts of violence, to instil fear in the hearts of all negroes, and the majority of the state's population were forced into racism, in fear of being targeted by the KKK. Parker clearly conveys his sympathy for the negro population in the opening image, as it shows how black people were being excluded and treated unfairly. In this scene, there are two drinking taps in a small room, one for black people and one for white people which is clearly much better. This highlights one of the main themes in the film, racism.

The sign for negroes was slightly lower than that of the white people. This may seem like an insignificant detail, but Parker cleverly included this to indicate the white supremacy in Mississippi. The water pipes for the taps separate the room into two halves, which represents the segregation which white people are forced to suffer. Parker uses cinematography to make these signs of separation clear, by having the camera face front on to the wall. The black people's tap is also broken and unmaintained, which highlights the fact that no one in the town looks after them.

The audience can feel Parker's sympathy for all the dead negroes who fell victim to the racism and hatred in Mississippi, in the second half of the opening sequence. The camera pans across gravestones which symbolize death, and then focuses on a still frame which dwells on a burning building with lots of fire. This foreshadows all the violence, hatred, and anger which is seen in the rest of the film. Throughout the scene you can hear a negro lady singing a sad song, which allows you to understand that black people aren't equal, and that they are forced to feel like they don't belong there: "take y hand, lead me home". The song also makes you feel melancholy, and creates a strong sense of pathos. Parker effectively juxtaposes the tap scene with this scene, in order to give the audience a clear understanding of the racism and prejudice against black people in Mississippi. Parker vividly shows examples of this violence, prejudice, and segregation, through strong scenes of the murder and bashing of black people and those who stood up for them. In the next scene, three civil rights boys are murdered by the KKK. Two of them are white, and one of them is black.

They were driving towards the Mississippi border, with the intentions of introducing equality between black and white people into other states, after failing to do so in Mississippi. Knowing about their work, the KKK decided to get rid of them, so they sent some of their members to follow the three boys in their car. This pursuit scene is set in a very dark landscape, in which the civil rights boys are driving a car with its lights on. Parker effectively uses silence to build anticipation in the audience, until three other cars appear, pursuing the boys. These cars do not have their lights on, and they are concealed in the night.

Ominous music starts to play, which slowly starts to build and get louder to create suspense. The cars eventually turn their lights on, and start ramming the boys' car, so they are forced to swerve off the road and make a run for it. The boys realize that one of the cars is a police car as it puts its flashing lights on, so they pull over to talk to the policeman. The sheriff speaks to the boys like they are filth, and rudely invades their space by sticking his face right up to theirs to threaten them: “ now you listen to me Nigger loving Jew boy”.

He then shoots all three boys without hesitation, and amidst the three men's raucous laughter, he says: “ I shot me a nigger”. This shows that members of the KKK get some form of joy out of being cruel to negroes, and that they don't value black people's lives any more than animals. Parker feels great pity towards black people, and is extremely critical of the white people in Mississippi, and shows them as ignorant and stupid in the film. He also highlights that they act as if nothing is going on, and they believe that black people are treated as equals.

In one scene there is a group of black people singing in a church, and again it is a sad song that they are singing, so that the audience is reconnected with the pain that the negroes are suffering. When they exit the church, members of the KKK are waiting for them, so they try to get away but the members chase them down and bash them. One little boy just closes his eyes and stands still instead of running, and the camera focuses on him for a while, until a KKK member walks up to him.

Parker uses silence during this part of the scene, so that the audience can relate to what the boy is feeling, as he is trying to forget about the violence around him and get away from it all. This silence is suddenly broken when the man kicks the negro boy to the ground Parker expresses his anger towards Mississippi's system of law and the people who enforce it, because there is a strong sense of injustice against negroes, but Parker wants equality between the two races.

When Ward manages to get information out of a little negro boy, who witnessed certain members of the KKK bashing a negro man, he takes the case to Mississippi's county court where he hopes that he can finally bring justice to the KKK. Ward's efforts were to no avail, as the court was biased towards white people, and let the KKK members off without a charge: "The court understands that the accused's actions were somewhat brought about by outside influences".