

The themes of existentialism in “the shawshank redemption”



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The Themes of Existentialism in " The Shawshank Redemption" Existential themes can be found in so many different mediums, such as in TV show, books, poems, music, dance and the list can go on and on. I must be fair in saying that " The Shawshank Redemption" is on a small list that I have as favorites. This film is full of existential platforms. The main character displays actions that lead us to believe that he believes he is free. The supporting character has a completely different view as to how he believes he is free. Together however, they are searching for the same thing, hope, which ironically one thinks he has it and the other denies him-self of even thinking he has it. Andy and Red are the two main characters and who are used to offset these contrasts and play an integral part for the writer to communicate how each see's not only each other but also how they themselves see each other. Early on, in a couple of particular scene, the writer begins to give you an existential glimpse of the main characters spirit. The first, happens in the court room where Andy has a blank stare about himself and in the second, we see Andy smiling on the rooftop while gazing at his prison mates. The writer wants us to believe that Andy is having an out of body experience during the trial that puts him in jail for the murder of his wife and her lover, which we know he did not commit. A kind of a " WTF" moment, if you will. In the second scene Andy gives some advice to the captain of the guard concerning money while they are tarring a roof. For the advice and to draw up the legal paper work, Andy requests for the captain to buy beer for his " Co-workers". Andy's friend, Red simply states," we sat and drank with the sun on our shoulders and felt like free men. Hell, we could have been tarring the roof of one of our own houses. We were the lords of all creation. As for Andy he spent that break hunkered in the shade, a strange little smile on his

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face, watching us drink his beer." The writer/filmmaker here makes a point to not only show us Andy's smile but also has the supporting character "Red" narrates this part of the film. Andy is able to display his humanity while living in an inhuman manor. He is able to show us his humanity, despite what has been going on down in the laundry room with the sodomites. Andy continues to not live in that world mentally. Throughout the story Andy leads his life in a determinant manor. If I am to understand existentialism, I would define it as the way in which one chooses to live his or her life provided that the choices come from with-in themselves and where there are no out side influences directing their choices. Throughout the story Andy display a great desire to hold on to hope in order to survive in prison, and is slowly able to convince Red that it, hope, is essential. Red thinks that hope is dangerous, his belief of this comes about by his experience with the many prison mates he comes to know over his time inside Shawshank. Red speaks with a tone that makes you believe that he has actually seen them going mad while trying to stay hopeful: " Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane". In Andy's response to Red, once again the writer uses exceptional dialogue to convey the idea that there is always hope inside everyone, that it can never be corrupted or taken from you; " there's something inside, that they can't get to, that they can't touch. ... Hope". Andy is able to instill the importance of hope into Red; " Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things". The most significant quote for me in the film that expresses existentialism is when as Red is carving his name and states, "Get busy dying or get busy living. " Red has made the choice to leave security and begins to live hopeful. The overall message is hope, and that it resides inside of you if and only if you are aware of where it comes from. The writer wants <https://assignbuster.com/the-themes-of-existentialism-in-the-shawshank-redemption/>

you to believe that hope is self-generated and that you are the one that produces your attitude when contemplating your circumstances. Ultimately I disagree with this view; individually we will come to the conclusion that we fail towards hope, find despair and in up with absurdity. I believe that many of the existential philosophers come to conclude that we somehow have to take a leap of faith to get to where we are going. I would argue, and as I have in the past, that for me hope comes from divine intervention. It seems to me more plausible that we were in fact created and I choose believe in an all knowing, all loving GOD. To further my argument, in the arena of genetics, the community overwhelmingly agrees that a single strand of DNA contains 3.2 billion bits of coded information. Information used when DNA is coding which determines the color of your skin, the height that you will reach upon maturity and to way your body reacts to being cut. This equates to over 600,000 pages of information that determines every particle or our being. I have to acknowledge and concede to the fact that most of modern philosophers weren't around to see this evidence in scientific advancement but I would also conjecture that had they been exposed to our advancements, they may have come to the same conclusion as I have.