

Billy elliot analysis



**ASSIGN
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How is the concept of Into the World conveyed in the film Billy Elliot? 'Into the World' describes a concept of a growth and change experienced by an individual – whether the change is physically, emotionally or intellectually- from the transition between one stage to another. In this transition there are often barriers and obstacles which the individual faces and needs to overcome. The notion of 'into the world' is clearly displayed in the film Billy Elliot (2000) directed by Stephen Daldry.

The film Billy Elliot set in Durham, England during the context of the miners' strike of 1984-1985, examines the story of one boy's dream to become a professional dancer. The eponymous character Billy Elliot transitions as he develops from a stereotypical mining town status to a ballet dancer.

Throughout the film, the exploration of Billy growing up and advancing into the wider world is shown, as he struggles against the gender expectations of his working class community and the socioeconomic situation that the miners' strike has put his family in.

It is not merely a physical journey but also an inner journey where Billy and his family and friend's perspectives about themselves and their worlds shift. An individual's determination to pursue a dream can inspire them to challenge society's expectations as they transition into a new world. Daldry portrays how barriers can prevent individuals to achieving their dream. In the opening scene, the slow motion shot of Billy jumping up and down on the bed with a close up shot of his ebullient face reveals his natural talent for dancing.

It offers the reoccurring motif of dance and music, as the diegetic sounds of the T Rex song “Cosmic Dancer” plays and foreshadows what is to unfold: a story about a passion for dancing. The establishing shot shows that despite Billy’s awkward movements, there is a sense of harmony and freedom that dance provides for him. However, his lower-class status is revealed through high-angle shot in the strike scene the miners, which include his father and brother.

This exterior scene where we are bombarded with noise and violence, establishes the social disorder that is endemic and suggestions are made that Billy’s poverty acts as a barrier for development. Progression is first made into the world by Billy, as the camera zooms in to focus on the dancer’s feet and then on Billy’s boxing boots. This visual metaphor reinforces that Billy does not belong to this world. The teacher Mrs Wilkinson dares him to join the students. She, unlike Billy, is trapped in a world that offers little fulfilment, although is a catalyst for Billy’s advancement.

Lost in a world that is collapsing upon itself and that exposes violence, Billy is offered a lifeline to another place: a world of dance, passion, creativity and freedom. Billy although refuses due to the expectations and perspectives of his community, but we know he is excited as he moves into the world of his imagination as we view an excerpt from a Fred Astaire film. This interlude reflects Billy’s joy and the close up shot shows Billy smile for the first time. Although, Billy’s dialogue “I don’t know what to do”, expresses his discomfort and he is cautious and indecisive about pursuing dance.

The props of the ballet shoes as he takes them home and hides them from his father, symbolises that his decision will not be accepted. His father's lack of understanding and anger is shown when he follows Billy to the boxing class and finds his son dancing. Jackie's dialogue " You! Out! Now! " and close up of his face, expresses disbelief and horror. Billy's dialogue " I hate you! " and actions to his father highlight his anger and frustration for his father to change attitudes and to support his decisions.

Jackie finding out about Billy dancing is another restriction into the world, due to different perspectives on ballet. A high angle tracking shot follows Billy escape, as non-diegetic music of T Rex's ' Children of the Revolution' plays, emphasising his rebellion towards his father and the community. The high angle shot of the empty training hall, where Billy has private lessons, and we see Billy holding props. He is holding a soccer ball, a few precious possessions, a letter from his mother, a T-Rex tape and a football jersey, showing that despite his interest in dance, he is just a ' normal boy'.

As Billy offers the prop of his mother's letter, Mrs Wilkinson begins to read it. The letter is significant, as his mother's word " always be yourself", is giving permission for Billy to enter his new world and shows that it would be easier to transition if his mother was here. The pivotal scene where Jackie experiences Billy's audition dance piece, is a major step in the relationship and transition of Billy and his father. The strong rhythm and dynamics of the diegetic music mimics Billy's emotions and pride he has in his love of dance. He shows his father the world he wants to grow into and that he is talented. Through this confrontation, Billy transitions as he and his father grow closer.

Jackie changes perspective and is going to take responsibility and give his son a chance, shown by the dialogue “ I’ll handle this myself”. Although Billy begins to transform, he is never far from the forces that may destroy him. The continuous long shots of police in the background remind Billy of the dominant presence in his world. This is also visible at Royal Ballet School, where an aerial long shot shows another world.

His experience is both unfamiliar and threatening, and Billy feels disappointed about his audition. We see Billy returning to the changing rooms where he attacks the boy, who tries to comfort him. He resorts to behaviour he has learnt from his father and brother as his language echoes his brother’s Tony, as he tells the boy “ fuck off...you bent bastard. ” Billy’s obstacle of his world of violence is still apparent. It is not until the long shot of Billy and Jackie in the interview where Billy is drawn out regarding his love dance, that we see a change. He describes dancing as “ like a bird...like electricity. His response describes the sensation of transformation through dance. He expresses the freedom and liberation that dancing gives him. Not only has Billy overcome the obstacles of the expectations and stereotypes of his community and transitioned into a new world of dance, but his father’s transformation is highlighted too, as he has a changed perspective. They have both travelled a long way and there has been a positive change in their relationship. Billy and his father’s growth and change, convey the concept of Into the World in the film Billy Elliot.