

Psycho essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller Psycho was first screened in 1960 and since has become one of the most popular films of all time. Hitchcock pulls together tension, empathy and drama to make Psycho a well crafted exciting film. Psycho is set in a remote town, far away from civilisation, the motel is very isolated and there is no one else around. This creates a lot of fear and tension as the audience anticipates that if something were to happen, no one would find out about it.

Marion Crane enters the motel in a horrendous rainstorm in the middle of the night; this is a signpost for danger and indicates to the audience that something deplorable will happen. The house situated above the motel is very isolated and daunting, this relates back to the genre of the film and it makes the audience wonder what the house is concealing. When Ms Crane is being allocated a room, she strikes up a conversation with the motel manager; Norman Bates, this dialogue tells us that the motel is rarely visited and that "no one stops here if they can help it".

This indicates to the audience that things are not quite right and the motel is not a safe place to stay. It is a signpost of what's yet to come. Norman seems threatened by his mother as she dominates him and tells him what he can and cannot do; this makes the audience feel sympathetic and pitiful for Norman. When he refuses to accompany Ms Crane into her bedroom for supper it creates empathy between the audience and Norman as we see his kind, gentlemanly side shows through. This perception of Norman Bates changes suddenly as he enters the parlour with Ms Crane.

The camera focuses our attention on the numerous stuffed birds of prey situated around the room, we associate these images with their owner Norman Bates. The birds convey ideas of death, destruction and murder. This makes the audience think that maybe Norman has a hidden side to him. The extended dialogue between Norman and Marion helps the audience to understand what the characters are like. Norman comes across as very strange, he is a taxidermist with no friends who lives with and never disobeys his mother. He is a very isolated character. Norman says some strange things, which indicate to the audience that he is not quite as he seems.

He tells Ms Crane that she “ eats like a bird” this suggests that he will do to her what he did to the birds, kill her. Thus creating tension and empathy between the audience and Ms Crane as we are beginning to think her stay at the Bates motel won't be for that long! When Norman talks of his mother we see the birds of prey situated behind him in the background, these images of death and violence make the scene more threatening. When the pair are discussing the ‘ mad house’ the camera zooms in on Norman's angered face showing us graphically his temper.

The camera cuts from face to face showing each other's facial expressions. This conveys tension because it keeps the audience wondering if something will happen. If the camera stayed too long on one face the tension would not be so high. Norman's eyes are always in the centre of the frame showing us that he is determined and focused. The director focuses on this more once Ms Crane has departed the scene; Hitchcock uses the lighting to shine only

on Norman's and the birds of prey's eyes indicating to the audience that the two objects are very similar.

This suggests that Norman could be a killer as the birds were. When Norman is spying on Marion the camera focuses on his eye, they do not blink just stare, that is the sign of a killer and creates drama and tension. Tension is created in the infamous shower scene. This is all down to the brilliant directing by Hitchcock. While Ms Crane is washing her self, there is no background music; the silence signposts that the director is leading up to a big scene. While Marion is alone in the shower she is isolated and vulnerable.

The longer Marion washes the longer the audience anticipates something will happen, it drags out the suspense to make it last longer which has a greater impact on the viewer. Whilst Marion is washing she turns her back to the door and we see someone enter the bathroom. Hitchcock's use of dramatic irony here creates empathy between the audience and Marion as we feel sorry for her. We are fully aware of the situation she is in. When the killer is slashing at Marion the camera is used to perfection to create drama and tension.

It switches between Marion and the killer showing the horror and pain on Marion's face and then relating this back to the killer by showing his face instantly, it reminds us of the awful thing that is occurring. When the stabbing begins the deathly silence leads to a horrible screeching noise that makes the murder even more shocking. After the killer has exited the scene and Marion falls down she leaves her hand out stretched to the audience creating empathy as she is all alone and grasping for hope.

She makes dramatic movements, pulling down the shower curtain and tumbling over the side of the bath. It drags out the pain and discomfort that she is suffering, she does not die quickly it is a slow painful death. Hitchcock wanted the audience to feel helpless and saddened. The blood pouring down the drain shows the audience that she is dead, it is a metaphor saying that her life is ‘draining’ away. The camera focuses on Marion’s unblinking eye, this reminds us of Norman and his steady staring eyes.

It relates the victim to the killer creating drama and tension. One of the key features Hitchcock wanted to convey in this scene is that it suggests horror and violence. Suggestion is often worse than reality. Hitchcock is a master of creating a thoughtful high-tension thriller that is designed to make the audience think about what is happening. Psycho is no exception with many twists and turns that keep the audience guessing. Hitchcock creates drama and tension at every turn in the plot to make Psycho an incredibly exciting densely packed masterpiece.

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