

Symbolism in the truman show

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Analyse how one or more symbols were used to present an important idea or ideas. In *The Truman Show*, directed by Peter Weir, three recurring symbols were used to present important ideas. These motifs; the dome, the circle and the chest present important themes, such as entrapment, repetition and an extreme invasion of privacy. These motifs are evident throughout the film, and reinforce the superficial nature of Truman's life. The dome; the enclosure where Truman has lived his whole life; presents the important idea of entrapment. Truman's hometown of Seahaven is a television set, built under a giant arcological dome in Hollywood. Due to his extreme aquaphobia; forced upon him by his father's tragic drowning, Truman has no way of leaving this isolated community. Truman is trapped, with no means of escaping his superficial life. Peter Weir utilises bird's eye view shots over the dome to demonstrate the dome in its entirety, and the inescapable nature of it. This shot shows the audience the true cage-like appearance of Truman's life. His life in the dome is comparable to animals in a zoo; he has no privacy, no escape, and is being observed 24/7. The dome not only symbolises entrapment; it is the trap which Truman is caught in. The circular motifs represent the important idea of repetition in Truman's life. Just like the cycle of actors who pass his house " Lady... flowers... dented Beetle", his life is revolving in a never-ending circle. Truman's life is boring; his days have little variability from one day to the next. Truman yearns for change and adventure, but his aspirations are never reached as he continues on this cycle. The filmmaker has used other circular motifs, such as the revolving door and the round-about, observed from a bird's eye view shot, to develop the symbolism of Truman's life being a continuous, repetitive loop. These motifs develop the audience's understanding of Truman's life, as they

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sympathise with his need for change and adventure. Our overall understanding of Truman is deepened by his need and search for change. Truman is "On the air, unaware". This is demonstrated by the lack of privacy, represented by his opening of the chest. When Truman goes into the basement, he thinks he is alone, but in fact, he is being broadcasted live to millions of people around the world. Here we see Truman at his most vulnerable, as he sorts through his private possessions; his map of Fiji, Sylvia's cardigan, and the collage he constructed of her face. This unknown privacy invasion is shown by the extreme close-up shot of the padlock as he enters his secret combination. Here the audience empathises with Truman's need of privacy with our own. This is used to show the audience Truman's true feelings and makes us realise how genuine he is. Peter Weir has used the dome, the circular motifs and the chest to demonstrate important ideas. The theme of entrapment is represented by the dome, the inescapable structure in which Truman lives. The circular motifs symbolise repetition and consistency in his life, and the Truman's struggle to break free from this never ending cycle. The theme of an unknown lack of privacy is shown by the shots of Truman in the basement, when he is at his most vulnerable. These ideas not only contribute to the plot, but to the audience's understanding of Truman, and his struggle to break free.