

Witness essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Witness is a 1985 detective thriller directed by Peter Weir which expresses the theme “ clash of cultures”. This clash is highlighted by the use of music, various camera angles and camera shots and the narrative structure of the film. The clash between Amish pacifism and modern American society’s attitude towards violence also affects their bond.

These components have affected Rachel and John’s ability to have a long-lasting relationship. The audience is oriented through three key scenes. The opening scene orientates the audience about the Amish the scene also establishes the peaceful Amish culture. Book arrives at the Lapp farm is the second scene which represents the clash of culture, the clash is shown immediately when book hits the bird house. Finally the third scene is gun of the hand, in this scene the audience are introduced to how the Amish cope with violence and how the English cope with violence. The film commences with the view of long, lush grass with the Amish emerging from it soon after, accompanied by natural and ambient lighting.

This establishes the Amish effectively as peaceful people who are in harmony with nature. However, this view of the Amish is soon juxtaposed in the next scene with the English. Weir successfully uses a long shot of a train station with everyone doing their own thing along with harsh and artificial lighting. This is presented very effectively because the audience realise that the director is making a negative comment about society. Furthermore, visual juxtaposition is used effectively when Book first arrives at the Lapp farm. The visual of the car, symbolising the artificial and violent western world, is visually juxtaposed with the agricultural farm house of the Amish.

This shows the differences and clash and incompatibility of the two cultures. Also, Weir uses an interesting piece of imagery when Book crashes his car into a birdhouse on the Lapp farm and breaks it. This symbolizes Book's arrival on the Lapp farm, bringing all the violence from the English world and destroying the peacefulness of the Amish culture.