

# Buffy the vampire slayer analysis essay



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episode starts properly when Buffy Summers, a 16 years old girl moves to Sunnydale, from LA with her mother. This is not the setting that the audience would expect for a vampire story as the word 'Sunnydale' hardly paints a picture of a dark, horror place full of vampires. Therefore, this name subverts the traditional signifier's. On the first day of school, the popular girl named Cordelia inducts Buffy into the cool crowd, Buffy attempts to be friends with three other students, Willow, Xander and Jesse. This gesture shows us that Buffy is a good judge of character, strong minded and that she is a leader not a follower. Buffy goes to the school library to get some text books. The library, although a more unusual setting was much more like something from a vampire story, it was dark and empty. To add tension the producers used 'scary' disjointed music to try and set the scene and the camera moves in onto a newspaper article, to which you can read the headline which refers to a missing teenage boy. This article casts a question mark over the 'normal' nice Sunnydale. Then a figure appears behind Buffy, it is Buffy's new watcher and the new school librarian, Giles. He brings a book with 'Vampyr' on the cover and scares Buffy off. This endorses the old traditions as the book was old, and full of cobwebs, possibly to add more mystery to this section. The spelling 'Vampyr' again highlights the books age and tries to make it look even more strange, this also brings more history and tradition into the episode, two elements that are important to any gothic style story.

The show seems to take a different twist when a dead body is found in the school changing rooms. It is unusual that the body was discovered in the school and another good point to note is that the victim was a man, which is unusual for a vampire story, as traditionally the victims were all defenseless

females. Buffy to investigate and found the body was killed by vampires. At home, Buffy prepares for her night out to the 'Bronze,' Sunnydale's only night club. Her mum thinks that everything is going to work out in Sunnydale and that they will be able to have a happy life there. It is very ironic as Buffy knows that bad things are just around the corner and also this shows that her mother is unaware that she is a 'vampire slayer'. On her way to the Bronze, Buffy senses she is being followed and heads into an alleyway. A tall young man comes out of the shadows searching for her. She swings down from a bar above him and knocks him to the ground. He claims not to bite and that he just wants to help her. This section endorses up to the point where Buffy swings down and attacks the man. He warns her of the Harvest and tells her about the Hellmouth. This name paints a bad picture in the audience's minds and it is the total opposite to Sunnydale. Later at the Bronze, Buffy chats with Willow about boys. She tries to inspire Willow to stop waiting and to 'seize the day.' Buffy spots Giles upstairs and goes up to talk to him. He continues to tell her she is the Slayer and has no choice in the matter. At first the setting for this scene may seem to be totally radical in a vampire style story, however after thought the venue is dark and full of young potential victims so is a modern adaptation of the settings for the older tales. For example, the more traditional tales were set in a graveyard or 'spooky' house, which was dark and the time was always in the dead of night. These characteristics can also be linked to the nightclub used in Buffy, as it too is dark and people only go to these clubs during the hours of darkness. The show seems to take a different twist when a dead body is found in the school changing rooms. It is unusual that the body was discovered in the school and another good point to note is that the victim

was a man, which is unusual for a vampire story, as traditionally the victims were all defenseless females. Buffy to investigate and found the body was killed by vampires. At home, Buffy prepares for the night out to the 'Bronze,' the only night club in Sunnydale. Her mum thinks that everything is going to be fine in Sunnydale and they can have a happy life there. It is very ironic as Buffy knows that bad things are just around the corner and also this shows that her mother is unaware that she is a 'vampire slayer'. On her way to the club, Buffy senses she is being followed and heads into an alleyway. A tall young man comes out of the shadows searching for her. She swings down from a bar above him and knocks him to the ground. He claims not to bite and that he just wants to help her. This section endorses up to the point where Buffy swings down and attacks the man. He warns her of the Harvest and tells her about the Hellmouth. This name paints a bad picture in the audience's minds and it is the total opposite to Sunnydale. Later at the Bronze, Buffy chats with Willow about boys. She tries to inspire Willow to stop waiting and to 'seize the day.' Buffy spots Giles upstairs and goes up to talk to him. He continues to tell her she is the Slayer and has no choice in the matter. At first the setting for this scene may seem to be totally radical in a vampire style story, however after thought the venue is dark and full of young potential victims so is a modern adaptation of the settings for the older tales. For example, the more traditional tales were set in a graveyard or 'spooky' house, which was dark and the time was always in the dead of night. These characteristics can also be linked to the nightclub used in Buffy, as it too is dark and people only go to these clubs during the hours of darkness. Buffy spots a vampire in the crowd below them and then realizes he's talking to Willow. The guy leaves with Willow as Buffy goes searching for

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him. She mistakenly attacks Cordelia and then pretty much ruins her chances for popularity. As Buffy leaves, she runs into Xander and asks him where Willow may have gone or else there will be one more dead body tomorrow. The vampire manages to lead Willow into the cemetery where he throws her into a tomb stone. As he tries to escape, Darla arrives with Jesse. Buffy and Xander turn up and Buffy kills one of the vampires and then fights with Darla as Xander gets Willow and Jesse out to safety. A vampire shows up and fights with Buffy. While they are fighting, Darla escapes to get Jesse, Xander and Willow. The vampire throws Buffy into a coffin where he jumps in and leans in to bite. Apart from Buffy, a female fighter, who manages to attack all the vampires single handed. This ending endorses the signifiers we think off when we talk about vampires. As the setting, a graveyard is the usual place for an attack in a gothic or vampire story. It is also interesting to note that the episode concludes with a cliffhanger, an unusual ending for many gothic style stories and films. As traditionally, the story finished with either the death of a victim or of the attacker. In any television programme or feature film, camera angles and effects are important as they portray certain feelings that the producers want to show to the audience, these may be something like making the audience think a character is small and weak by using a high angle shot, which looks down on the character. Or you could use the opposite effect by making a character look strong and powerful from using a low angle shot (looking up). In ' Buffy The Vampire Slayer' they producers use one effect which is featured on several occasions. This is where a quick series of flashing images is presented to the viewers; this technique is called a ' montage of images.' In episode 1 this feature is used twice, in the first case, the montage is used as a title sequence and shows <https://assignbuster.com/buffy-the-vampire-slayer-analysis-essay/>

images that both subvert and endorse the conventions, including images of signifiers including black cats, stakes and green monsters along with modern things like female fighters. This sequence promises viewers fast pace, all action entertainment and shows clips of future episodes in order to encourage continual viewing throughout the series. The second montage is shown where Buffy is in bed dreaming at the beginning of the actual programme, after the introduction and the title sequence. This series of images is showing the audience that she is restless as there is some kind of distortion in the images, and some are not fully visible. This makes the viewers to try and understand the sequence and the majority suggest that Buffy is involved in some way with vampires or as a protector of some description. The images shown include an old book which suggests the cultural history of vampires, a cross which represents Christianity and the way to kill vampires. Because of this legend, the cross points out that Buffy is a protector.

Moreover, Buffy creator Joss Whedon described Buffy the Vampire Slayer as an “all over the place transcending-genre kind of thing.” (Stein, 2002) Well the text is mainly considered to be of the teen genre it does contain elements of the horror genre too. The fight against monsters and the idea of a patriarchal society is all central to the horror genre. The way that Buffy's world is invaded by monsters, horror invades 'home' is another shared convention between horror and BVS. However one aspect of the show that goes against the horror genre is the role of women. In previous horror texts women were weak and frightened; however BVS changes traditional genre and ideological views. “Buffy's embodied strength, power, and assertiveness

destabilize the traditional masculinity power of the vampire character in the horror genre, in effect policing those who prey upon the feminized” (Owen, 1999). Through the text femininity is conveyed as a forceful strong identity. Buffy is stronger than all the men she meets both physically and mentally. However Buffy is not empowered by past feminist movements in the text. She is empowered by herself. Indeed Karras writes that “ Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Buffy’s relationship with her mother can be understood as a metaphor for the tenuous relationship between second and third wave feminists”(Karras, 2002) Buffy’s mother feels angry at the fact that Buffy doesn’t take full use of the rights she now has to the feminist movement of the 60’s.

In conclusion, ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ as a popular culture because it provides a good blend of many aspects of both low and high cultures. It contains scenes that are scary, action packed and also offers addictive viewing like a soap opera. Buffy can be viewed by many different age groups as it seems that there is almost something for all, just the opening episode included many different styles of programming, from comedy to gothic style features. ‘ Yet Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ also manages to defy convention by establishing its protagonist as an all strong, powerful willed women. “ Buffy as an open-image hero expose stereotypes and coded symbols that shore up a rigid war-influenced gender system in an attempt to chart new meanings for womanliness and manliness” (Early, 2001)

Reference list

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" Chose an episode of any teen TV programme of your choice and identify the generic conventions of this TV text." [ <http://www.markedbyteachers.com/as-and-a-level/media-studies/chose-an-episode-of-any-teen-tv-programme-of-your-choice-buffy-the-vampire-slayer-and-identify-the-generic-conventions-of-this-tv-text.html>]