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Saving Private Ryan takes a documentary approach to war to reflect on the day of the D Day landings. The film is based around World War Two, where the invasion of Normandy had taken place between the Germans and the allied forces, on Omaha beach on the 6th of June 1944. The film tracks a group of soldiers that are commissioned to look for one person who must be sent back home as his three brothers have been KIA, that person is Private Ryan. It was intentionally made for war veterans, to attempt to bring back to life the reality of war. When Steven Spielberg created the film, his objective was to try to portray the terrors and triumphs that occurred during D Day. He wanted to deglamourise the tendency of war, therefore giving the audience an inaccurate image of heroism.

Instead, it aims for the truth and shows people dying brutally and painfully. Spielberg tries to capture the realism of war tightly and precisely. He uses different techniques such as camera angles, colour and tracking of Miller throughout the first 30 minutes to try to reveal the horrors and terrors of war, to make it seem realistic to the audience and enable them to identify and make them feel part of the action. In the opening five minutes of Saving Private Ryan, Spielberg tries to convey a sense of lament. He offers them a time to reflect on the amount of lives lost and the futility of war. Spielberg tries to make the audience focus on how war can damage a person's life.

He shows this by showing a close-up on an old man's feet walking towards a memorial gravestone; it gives the audience the idea that we are following his personal journey of remembrance. This shot is then cut away to a long shot of the old man, where he is walking in front of his family, as they trail behind him. This image can signify how war has isolated him from his own family, as <https://assignbuster.com/analyse-how-spielberg-communicates-the-horror-of-the-d-day-landings-in-the-opening-30-minutes-of-saving-private-ryan/>

they have not shared the same horrific experiences; it shows that they will never fully understand the pain and torture he has been through, therefore isolating him from them. It also shows the amount of damage war can cause to a person's life. Spielberg then to shows the amount of lives lost in war by using a PAN of the gravestones.

In this pan shot, Spielberg allows the audience to see the magnitude of the colossal loss of life during war, enabling them to reflect on the purpose of war. The perfect white of the gravestones shows the innocence of the soldiers but the uniformity seems to dehumanise them; they are seen as a number and their efforts seem less significant and personal. At the start of the film, there is a non-diegetic sound of a lone trumpet. The trumpet sound is patriotic and inspirational as it is associated with the military, it also signifies a lonely quest in war. It can also reflect on the isolation war has created around the old man, as it plays by itself. As the film progresses, the diegetic sounds of the old man's visceral sobs are strongly moving as it shows the audience the emotional trauma he has been through.

Spielberg uses an extreme close up on his withered eyes, which are teeming with emotional tears, to allow the audience to identify with the character and to help them look back into his personal life, throughout the war. As the old man continues to walk towards the graveyard, the sounds of the waves behind him are calm and soothing; this is a big contrast to the waves in the war as they soon become more violent as we are taken back straight to the D Day landing battle. It shows that in the passing of time peace has been restored. In the gruesome 24-minute's battle scene, Steven Spielberg

focuses the horror of the D Day landings. He wanted to show the audience the struggle and hardship of war by deglamourising Hollywood's version of it and showing people the brutal reality. In addition, he highlights the failure in tactics by the allied forces when they landed too far out in the sea, giving the German forces the advantage to attack easier.

Spielberg dismantles the steadicam to follow the soldiers into the battle. This makes the audience feel as if they are part of the action because they can view and experience the battle as one of the soldiers. The first scene that we see from the battle is of battle craft ships carrying the American soldiers towards Omaha Beach. This shot is cut away to a close up on Millers shaking hands. This becomes a recurrent image throughout the first 30 minutes of the film, as it shows the fear and fragility within the soldiers and that everyone is fallible in war. As the camera zooms out to show all the faces of the men on the craft, the audience notice that they are all pale and torn with fear for what is to come for them on the beach.

While the camera is still zooming out to show all the faces of the soldiers, the audience are given a visceral image as two soldiers on the boat become sick. The white sick from the soldiers gives the audience a visceral impact, as they too are affected by the soldier's physical fears. The military dialogue that is spoken by Miller launches the audience instantly into the war and the audience, like the soldiers, feel disorientated and destabilised. As the door to the battle craft descends, sudden chaos takes over as the German forces fire their guns at the helpless soldiers. At this point Spielberg has the cameras cutaway from the Americans over to the Germans side. The use of crane shot

shows the Germans are higher up than the allied forces down below; this is effective as it shows the Germans power and superiority over them.

He also tries to show how remarkable it was for the allied forces to win this battle, as it shows the distance they need to travel up the beach in order to succeed. As the soldiers are suddenly killed one by one with the diageitic sound of the rushing bullets, enforces the horrific on slaughter of the German attack. Spielberg brings on the hand held cameras to follow the soldiers throughout the first 30 minutes to make the audience confused and disorientated and to feel even more involved with the action. On landing, many soldiers fall into the sea below beginning the underwater sequence. As the camera drifts underwater, the audience are given a false sense of safety from the above chaos; it can also add disorientation towards them as the sea appears calmer less chaotic.

The sound becomes muted separating the audience from what is happening above, making it seem calmer and safer. The mid shot of man being killed underwater shows that there's no escape from what is above. In the third scene, Spielberg endeavours to concentrate on Miller, as he is seen as the main protagonist. He uses him to make the audience feel like they are following him as one of the soldiers, to experience and explore the dangers and horrors of the D Day landings. As Miller arrives at the beach, he is shell shocked by the attack. The camera zooms into a close up of him in slow motion; giving the audience a sense of disorientation and it creates the idea of helplessness within him.

Spielberg purposely put in the non-diegetic whistle that overlaps Miller's shell shock state as a device to get into Miller's mind. They can only hear the faint sounds of destruction around him and the shouts from men screaming from pain and agony. It highlights how the soldiers become numb and acted only on instinct. Spielberg works to show the horror of war. He emphasises the suffering and pain that the soldiers are feeling, as seen through Miller's eyes. Miller sees a mid shot of a man trying to look for the missing part of his arm that has just been recently blown off.

This shows the audience how devastating war was and how the soldiers could not think rationally during it, that it was all based on instinct. As we move up the beach with Miller, the audience get another visceral image. This shot is a close up on a man's intestines, it shows the cruelty of war was almost barbaric and that everyone is fallible. The soldier's cries of 'momma' are hugely poignant as he seeks protection and care that is clearly unavailable, which makes the audience feel sympathy for him, as he is helpless. The bright red of his blood shows the vitality of life and it contrasts with his white skin as it shows a young man killed in his prime.

Spielberg uses a POV shot of Miller as we move further up the beach with him. He does this so that the audience can identify with him. As they get closer to the German forces, Miller's tactical intelligence is shown to the audience as he makes the mirror. This shot shows how tactical he is and his responsibilities, therefore making the audience respect him and trust him as he advances. Spielberg uses colour to communicate the horrors of the D Day landings.

Throughout the battle scene, the colour is a dull sepia; this complete loss of hope and exhaustion as the battle advances. There is a lot of aggressive shouting, as men, drowned out by gunfire and explosives shout out expletives. It highlights the anger and desperation that the soldiers are feeling. The repetition of phrases such as “ Grenades! Grenades!” shows the panic that they are feeling during battle. One shot that is seen near the end of the battle is a close up of a soldier kissing his cross and saying a religious phrase before he kills someone.

This shot can debate whether religion should be used in war and whether it can justify atone killing. As the Allied Forces start to gain power over the German defences, ceasing the horrific battle in the process, Spielberg takes the time to let the audience reflect on the violence and horrors of war, and its sheer futility. He allows them to realise how time has changed the perception of what happened in the battle and, along with it, realise man’s fallibility. A key piece of dialogue that is spoken by one of the soldiers after they had set alight to the German forces base is “ Don’t shoot let them burn”. This piece of dialogue shows how the soldiers through the battle have soon become sadistic towards the Germans to a point of them wanting to torture them.

Soon after the allied forces had taken over the German defences, one Jewish soldier begins to cry over a Hitler youth knife. His tears are filled with the loss of hope, revenge is seen to not offer redemption. Spielberg shows this to the audience to once again emphasis the futility of war, as retribution can never be achieved during such a brutal battle. In the very last scene of the

first 30 minutes, Spielberg enforces a sense of lament and reflection for the audience. This shot then leads up to an ECU on Miller's eyes; this replicates the close up on the old man's eyes at the beginning of the film. It humanises him and emphasises the brutality he has viewed, it personalises war.

The scene eventually ends with a crane shot of Omaha beach; this is to show the audience the futility of life and the full damage war creates, as it not only does it destroy man it also destroys nature as we see the sea turning red due to the blood. It reinforces the magnitude of lives and blood lost during the battle to a point that the sea turns red. The diegetic sound of the waves soon begins to become calmer as the fighting has ended; they soon start to fade out as the gentle music takes over. The music is the same as the music from the beginning, giving a patriotic atmosphere. Spielberg deliberately did not put any music in the battle because he wanted to allow the scenes to be more visceral and to have the audience experience the battle in every direct way. In conclusion, Spielberg has skilfully communicated the horrors of the D Day landings during the opening battle scene.

He shows the audience the true and respectful side of war. By combining the key techniques of camera angles, sound, dialogue, colour and tracking of Miller, he is able to bring out all the emotions and pain felt by the soldiers and create visceral scenes to impart the horror of the D Day landings. He made it seem realistic and true to the memories of what the battle was really like for the people in it and to help the audience experience the horrors and dangers of what they went through.