

Shawshank redemption literary review



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Shawshank Redemption Quietly moving, yet startlingly beautiful; Shawshank Redemption is one of those movies that gets better every time that I see it. It was directed by Frank Darabond and based on Stephen King's first non-horror novel. Morgan Freeman and Tim Robbins play two convicts serving time in a New England prison named Shawshank in the 1940's. Tim Robbins plays a man named Andy Dufresne, a banker, who is wrongfully convicted of murdering his wife and her lover and is sentenced to two life sentences. Andy gradually develops a friendship with a fellow convict by the name of Red (Morgan Freeman) who has a knack for "getting things" for people for the right price. Formerly a banker, Andy gets on the better side of Shawshank's bible thumping warden by doing his financial consulting and eventually helping him embezzle money from the prison. During his thirty year incarceration Andy slowly burrowed his way out of his cell, hiding the hole in the wall with a poster of Rita Hayworth. One stormy night he finally dug his way through the cell wall and escaped through five hundred yards of sewage pipe. Andy withdrew all of the money from the warden's accounts and anonymously alerted the press of the corruption at Shawshank. Soon after his escape, Red was released on parole and the two were reunited on a beach in Mexico. There is a scene in the film in which Andy and a few of his cell mates are allowed to leave the confines of the prison on a work detail to tar a roof. While working, Andy can't help but overhear one of the guards complaining about taxes he has to pay on an inheritance he received. Andy sets down his mop and approaches the guard and is nearly thrown off of the roof. At the last second, Andy informs him that he can keep the money without paying taxes and offers to setup the tax free gift in exchange for three beers a piece for each of his co-workers. The inmates drank the beer

<https://assignbuster.com/shawshank-redemption-literary-review/>

while Andy just watched with a strange smile on his face. Morgan Freeman (Red) who narrates the film stated, " You could argue he'd done it to curry favor with the guards. Or maybe make a few friends among us cons. Me, I think he did it just to feel normal again, if only for a short while. " When he was asked if he wanted a beer Andy told his friend that he had given up drinking. Although he was innocent, alcohol was a huge factor in why he ended up in prison. In this moment, Andy became a better person and incidentally gained the respect of his cellmates. Andy used his superior intelligence and intellect to gain prestige among the guards and to better the lives of his fellow inmates. Most of the other prisoners had become so dependent on life and routine behind bars, that they were completely detached from the outside world, and they became frightened of it. Hope of life on the outside and rejoining society was absent from them. This pessimism and lack of any hope caused the majority of the inmates to feel that Andy Dufresne's talk of a better life on the outside was pointless and would only lead to disappointment. After twenty years of his life sentence, Andy confides in Red about his dream of getting out of prison. Red tries to explain to him that in prison, hope is a dangerous thing. Andy responds with, " it comes down to a simple choice; get busy livin' or get busy dyin' ". This is one of the most powerful lines in the film. Instead of letting life pass him by, Andy chose to make use of the time that he had so much of. Andy taught Red that hope is not a dangerous thing; in fact, it gave him a reason to live. Through the constant beatings and occasional prison rapes, Andy never cracked. His hopes and dreams of someday making it out of that prison kept him alive. Hope is the central theme of this film. When Red tells Andy that he enjoyed playing the harmonica on the outside, he pulls some strings and

gets Red his own harmonica to play. This act of kindness and aim to bring Red something to remember what freedom feels like, demonstrates that Andy is trying to get him to realize that hope is worth believing. It is something that shouldn't be given up, even in the worst of situations. Red doesn't play it at first but after his discussion with Andy, Red is shown playing one single note. With this note it is apparent to the audience that Red had found a spark of hope; a memory of happiness; something to look forward to. Andy Dufresne reminded Red that there is more to life than the monotony of prison. At two hours and twenty Minutes, Shawshank Redemption is not just a prison story; it's a saga. You can't help but root for Andy as he works to gain favor with the guards, builds a library to better the lives of the other prisoners, tries to prove his innocence to a Warden that doesn't care, and uses his knowledge of finances to outsmart the system. Throughout all of this, he stays true to himself, betters the lives of the people around him and never loses sight of his dream. The ending left me with a cheesy smile from ear to ear and a compelling desire for more. The film is beautiful to look at. It is highly depressing and ugly, yet there is a beauty in how the minimal effects and lighting choices set the tone of the characters and what they are going through. The guards are usually shot in a low light, often in the shadows which helps to subconsciously reinforce the absurd idea that the guards are the bad guys. There is a scene in the film where Andy Dufresne locks the door of the Warden's office and plays an Italian opera over the intercom for the rest of the prison to hear. The camera pans out on the prisoners standing in the yard looking up in confusion and awe. As the camera continues to pan out and up you see what appears to be hundreds of inmates just standing there; listening. This visual effect gives the audience a

<https://assignbuster.com/shawshank-redemption-literary-review/>

deeper understanding of how rare and significant this simple act was. Red, as the narrator declares, “ I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don’t want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I’d like to think they were singing about something so beautiful, it can’t be expressed in words and it makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you; those voices soared higher and farther than anybody in a great place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away, and for the briefest of moments, every last man in Shawshank felt free". Andy got two weeks of solitary confinement for that stunt but claimed it was the easiest time he ever did. This film stands head and shoulders above many other movies as a testament to the endurance and power of the human spirit. It stands as a prime example of how regardless of what situation we find ourselves, with hope we can endure and prevail. It was nominated for seven academy awards but didn’t manage to get any, since the year’s big winner was Forrest Gump. It was very surprising to me how much I grew to love the characters in the film considering that they were convicted felons. Frank Darabond did an outstanding job of portraying the prisoners as the good guys and the guards as the villains. Richard Propes writes, “ It is hard to fathom that a " prison" movie could be a source of tremendous hope, light and inspiration. Yet, to call Shawshank Redemption a prison movie is to minimize its greatness. It is a brilliant film, a study of humanity in all its wonder AND it happens to take place within the confines of a prison. " In the future, I am sure this film will be deemed a true classic. We need more films today with powerful messages that provoke the senses and emotions as this film did. That is what makes this a must see movie and one that you will likely enjoy

viewing time and time again. If you haven't seen the Shawshank Redemption, you aren't just missing out on a great film, but a great life experience as well. Do yourself a favor and see this movie.