

Romeo and juliet essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Baz Luhrmann directed a modern adaptation of 'Romeo and Juliet'; it was hugely successful in capturing the imagination of its target audience- the younger generation. His intentions in making the film were to bring Shakespeare's "amazing genius" and extraordinary storytelling to the modern world. The incredible attention to detail and determination the director brought to the famous story to life for a modern audience ensured that the tale of ancient grudge, the power of fate and true love was made entirely accessible.

He chose 'Romeo and Juliet' because it relates to the modern themes that the audience can relate to. "It's all there" as the story has all the themes- Violence, murder, lust, love, poison, drugs. Knocking Shakespeare 'off his pedestal', Baz wanted his target audience to be younger to get them interested in Shakespeare. The audience is similar to Shakespeare's because it appeals to a wide-ranged audience.

My job and the whole point of this essay is to analyze the media techniques and effects in the opening sequence of Luhrmann's film 'Romeo and Juliet' starts with a blank screen then zooms in to an old-fashioned television with a black African-American woman saying the prologue for the first time. This is to portray to the audience that it is going to be a modern setting because there is no racist casting unlike in Elizabethan times. The television zooming in engages the audience. The stereotypical male would enjoy watching things that are violent and about fighting, so he knows it will be about fighting and violence when she, the newsreader, says, "ancient grudge break to new mutiny".

The stereotypical female would enjoy watching things about romance, so when she hears, " pair of star-crossed lovers" she knows that some elements of the film will be about love. As the newsreader finishes, the camera zooms into the middle of television and gives the effect of the film ' fast forwarding' over the city; this gives an effect of a fast moving film with lots of action. Then with operatic music you see large gothic, white words, " In fair Verona", this is to provide an emphasis on where it's set this appeals to today's modern audience because it deciphers Shakespeare's language.

The next significant image you see of a Jesus statue in the middle of the newspaper article, this is meant to emphasise that religion divides the Montagues and the Caplets Mexico, where they set ' Verona City', was known as the ' created world' as Shakespeare never went to Italy to study Verona's society when he wrote ' Romeo and Juliet'. " It was his vision as an Englishman, of this mythical Italianate country, where everyone was passionate and hot-blooded. " Luhrmann to choose this city because it that that had a modern look that could look dilapidated and a passionate.

This connects with Elizabethan times of politics, religion and violence connecting this is another reason to choose Mexico because politics linking religion therefore equally in violence still go on. At the start of ' Romeo and Juliet', Baz tries to put the film into a modern urban setting. He portrays the Headquarters of the Montagues and Caplets as skyscrapers to signify to the audience that they are important figures in the city. Both skyscrapers are the same height and separated with a huge Jesus statue this is to connate the companies are just as wealthy as each other and " both alike in dignity".

The Jesus statue between the buildings is another reference to the families being separated by religion. The helicopter and police cars at the beginning gives us the effect that it is going to be an action packed film and the Montagues and Caplets cause trouble. The mattresses give the audience the impression that there is a lot of homelessness in the city and give something familiar for the modern audience to relate to. This also emphasises the rivalling families cause trouble, which effects everyone.

In Shakespeare's original script the setting for the 3rd civil brawl was a "public place" so Baz chose the fighting scene to be in a petrol station to relate to today's audience. In this set, there are a lot of signs to provide a particular connotations to the audience; 'I'Amour' image of a 'Coca Cola' logo relate to the modern feel of things and the theme of 'Love Versus Hate' (I'Amour is the french word for love). 'Add more to fuel to your fire' sign signifies to the audience that sometimes dangerous is about to happen.

As the petrol station goes up in flames so does the memory of the 2nd civil brawl, Luhrmann might have meant to show that even though they are in the lime light they will still fight and their feud is having a negative effect on Verona. Kim Barrett, the fashion designer for 'Romeo and Juliet' chose the costumes carefully so that it would relate to the modern references to the characters and distinguish between the rivalling families. She describes the Montagues as 'utilitarian', normal and everyday like this is to give the audience the impression they are down- to- earth.

They wear sunglasses and un-buttoned, Hawaiian shirts to signify they live in a hot environment and hang around the beaches. The Montagues also have

tattoos on the back of the head, dyed hair, and chain necklaces to imply that they are laid back and extravagant. The Caplets are generally cleaner cut and have a ' more stylised and exaggerated look. ' They are more tidy than the Montagues this shows they are more dour and apprehensive. They wear religious icons like catholic cross necklaces and Jesus motif bullet-proof vest to show they are arrogant and think they are superior to their religious icons.

Sounds are exceptionally important in the opening of a film to engage the audience. Nellee Hooper, the dub-artist for ' Romeo and Juliet' tried to create enhancing atmosphere. The most dominant diegetic sound is the opening sequence is the sound of the car engines and people talking this is to make it sound realistic therefore real to the audience. Hooper chose exaggerated gun shots to emphasize that the guns are making the sound and that the situation is exaggerated.

The most dominant non-diegetic sound is high pitched, operatic voice that it makes it seem the film is going to be unsettling and disturbing. They have added this because it gives the effect of a religious choir like effect to indicate to the audience that elements of the film are religious. This sound also gives an eerie impression to the words flashing on the screen. To help appeal to a wide a wide age-ranged audience, Luhrmann helped the audience understand Shakespeare language with western genre aspects to give the viewer an image of the ' bad guys' and the ' good guys'.

This effect, intertextuality, is when the director chooses to combine 2 different genres of film. We know Baz does this when his dub-artist added spaghetti western qualities to the petrol station scene. They did because

they wanted the audience to relate with the story even if they can't understand the language. The Sounds included are leather and signs creaking, gun shots and an oil can being shot down. In Modern English this basically means, " throw your weapons to the ground or I will shoot you" the audience knows this due to the actions that occur after this is said.

This shot tells us, the audience, that Tybalt and Benvolio know when to surrender because they are holding up their hands to their crime and looking up to the authority figure, the Chief of Police. The characters are framed either side of this shot to show they apart from each other. Their costumes are important because it shows some similarities between the rivals. For example ; they are both wearing black trousers this is to show they are in the same situation and it may connote that the civilians think they are evil for disrupting the peace .

At this moment the viewer feels that the Chief of Police has authority and he's the ' good guy' because he is bringing an end to the brawl. The camera is in the viewpoint of a civilian overlooking the situation this is to give the impression that their fighting is drawing attention. The audience is automatically drawn to the diegetic sound of the megaphone of the Prince speaking and the sound of the helicopter that the policemen are in. This long shot, shows two people that make the characters seem smaller than if it was a medium or a close up.

The director chose this shot to show us that they are holding their hands up and emphasises that they're looking up. The effect of the scenery and background is that it's quite modern due to modern public transport. But it is

still quite run down due to litter and old-fashioned cars. This emphasises that the Montagues and Caplets cause trouble in the city and the city is getting quite neglected because of their fighting. The significant colour in this shot is red to connote blood and anger in the brawl. The most dominant colour is white in the sky and on the bus this might signify that the Chief is bringing peace to the city.

To conclude, How does the opening sequence to Baz Luhrmann's 1996-film version of 'Romeo and Juliet' engage the audience? It uses modern themes, techniques and connotations to appeal to today's modern audience. It uses intertextuality to intertwine different elements, techniques and themes. It uses different camera movement, shot angles to differentiate different aspects of the film. It uses setting to make it easier and prettier on the eye. So to conclude the conclusion, Luhrmann engages with the mood of violence and the hints of love. 'Romeo and Juliet' is excellently made and pure entertainment.

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