

Media essay – shrek essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

What is a fairytale? Most people would say a fairytale is a magical adventure story, where anything is possible. A damsel in distress trapped by an evil witch (or other nasty creatures such as a dragon) is rescued by a daring prince on a magnificent steed. A fairytale that fits this perception is Rapunzel who is locked away in a tower by a conniving witch and then rescued by a handsome prince; typically the story ends with their marriage and happily ever after. In my essay I am going to explore the film 'Shrek' and how it differs from a traditional fairytale.

By analysing and comparing the main characters, Shrek, Donkey and Lord Farquaad. I will comment upon the camera angles, lighting and music, and how these contribute towards the change in the story. As DreamWorks' film critics said this film is truly "The Greatest Fairytale Never Told!" The film starts as you would expect a fairytale to begin. An old book opens and a smooth, Scottish voice reads the old English typeface. It goes on to tell a story about a beautiful princess that had been cursed and locked away in a tower guarded by a terrible fire breathing dragon and the only way the curse could be broken was by 'true love and true love's first kiss'. This gives us the impression that 'Shrek' is going to be a traditional fairytale until a big, green hand appears ripping out the page and violently snapping the book shut, joking "Like that's ever gonna happen!" You hear a chain flush and the song All Stars - by SmashMouth begins to play as we see Shrek for the first time emerging out of the toilet with a page from the book attached to his foot.

Shrek looks like a normal ogre; big, green and ugly. He looks around and you see Shrek's home for the first time it looks comfortable, with the lighting

focusing on the house creating an almost ‘ grotto’ effect. He begins to perform his regular ‘ hygiene’ routine. He brushes his teeth with bug guts and smiles crookedly into the mirror causing it to smash; he also bathes in the pond where he kills a fish.

He sits at a table to eat with cutlery and a feast of a meal. He has a lit candle and a martini looking cocktail. He looks very civilised and has great etiquette for an ogre. This is defiantlynot your traditional expectation of an ogre. You would expect an ogre to live in a cave or shack in the middle of deep, dark woods and have no table manners, eat raw meat and drink out of a muddy old puddle.

However when the villagers attempt to capture him Shrek appears to be a traditional ogre. We have close up of the villagers feet running and a silhouette of Shrek tiptoeing behind them. Shrek threatens them by saying he will ‘ make a soup from your freshly peeled skin’, ‘ shave your livers’ and ‘ squeeze the jelly from your eyes’. One of the villagers tries to threaten Shrek by waving his torch frantically in front of him. Shrek licks his fingers and puts the torch out. You see the frightened look on the villagers’ face, just before Shrek roars and we have an extreme close up of his mouth and can see the flying saliva.

The villager’s torches are blown out and again we have a silhouette of Shrek’s face and his smirk. The villagers run away and Shrek laughs. At this point in the film the audience are in two minds about Shrek not knowing whether he is your standard nasty ogre or something completely different. When we first see Donkey his owner is preparing to sell him, you hear him

constantly talk about how he will “ never be stubborn again”. He then stops talking when his owner tries to sell him to the knights, when the knights take Donkey’s owner away fairy dust from Tinkerbell falls onto him, he smiles as he begins to fly away and says “ you may have seen a house fly maybe even a superfly but I bet you ain’t never seen a donkey fly! ” which at this point he falls back to the floor, where the knights then proceed to try and capture him.

He runs off into the woods closely followed by the knights, the music that accompanies the chase makes you really want Donkey to get away. He looks scared when he bumps into Shrek and shelters behind him. Donkey laughs when Shrek scares of the knights and starts to follow Shrek everywhere. His previous fear forgotten he begins to talk randomly and once he starts he pretty much doesn’t stop for the whole film! He seems to try and ‘ suck’ up to Shrek by saying ‘ Wow, you were really something back there’.

Donkey asks if he can ‘ stick’ with Shrek. When Donkey exclaims “ Man it’s good to be free” Shrek responds by saying “ now why don’t you go celebrate you freedom with you friends...

hmm? Donkey replies “ Uh...I don’t really have any friends” and starts to sing “ I’m all alone there’s no one here beside me...” You see Shrek’s face contort into anger as he glares at Donkey, Shrek yells “ STOP SINGING! ” picks Donkey up by the ears and places him a safe distance away. Donkey doesn’t seem to mind Shrek’s and ogre at all. When Shrek asks him “ take a look at me! What am I? ” Donkey looks up and down at Shrek then obviously says the first thing that comes to mind. “ Uhh...really tall? ” Shrek walks off

after Donkey claims that Shrek being an ogre doesn't bother him. When they get to Shrek's 'house' Donkey looks around with obvious distaste and states "Whew look at that who would want to live in a place like that?" Shrek doesn't look impressed with him and states envisaging the first word "That would be my home". Donkey taken aback completely changes his tone of voice "Oh and it's just lovely, it's amazing what you can do with such a modest budget.

I like that boulder that is a nice boulder". Donkey is a comical character and every word that seems to come out of his mouth seems to irritate Shrek. When Shrek discovers the fairytale creatures he immediately blames it on Donkey. After Shrek finds out that Lord Farquaad was the one who put them all in his swamp, he asks if anyone knows where to find him.

Donkey is only too happy to oblige. He seems only too willing to be Shrek's 'side-kick'. Later on in the film Donkey brings out a more gently side of Shrek which you don't really see until the end of the film. Lord Farquaad is a small ugly demanding character. When we see him for the first time we have a close up of his feet striding along a corridor and an extreme close-up of the lower half of his face.

The camera zooms out and we see the whole of Lord Farquaad. He is very short and has a stern, stuck up look on his face. He has the type of harsh mannerism you would expect Shrek to have. He tortures the Gingerbread Man and in general he is extremely rude and airs himself in an aloof manner. This isn't the kind of behaviour you would expect from a Lord.

Physically, Shrek fits in with the traditional fairytale. He is big, green and ugly just as you would expect an ogre to be. Lord Farquaad on the other hand is not what you expect. You would expect a tall, dark handsome prince not a lord, with kind and caring manners. Yet as the story unfolds we soon find out that he is short, pale, bony and abrupt.

What emphasises Lord Farquaad's lack of height is when he walks over to the Gingerbread Man and clicks his fingers to his knight to lower the table because he can barely see over it. When the Magic Mirror is brought in Lord Farquaad has the choice of three beautiful ' bachelorettes' these are Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and Princess Fiona. The film the Magic Mirror plays is like ' Blind Date' he shows the ' available' princesses to wed to make Lord Farquaad become King. This scene is aimed at the older audience as children may not have watched the TV programme, it also uses more mature language " mentally abused" for example, before and so it appeals to a wider range of audience. In a traditional fairytale we would expect Shrek's house to be dirty, muddy with basic amenities, if any, and be in a gloomy, dingy, spooky wood.

However, when we see it we realise it's a clean place with a homely, magical feel about it. There are signs showing that Shrek can read and write, even if they do say keep out! It's a tidy place framed by light woods and dappled sunlight. If someone asked you to imagine a castle the first thing that would come into your head would probably be an inviting place with a huge drawbridge and twinkling moat, with the sun shining gloriously.

Unfortunately when we see Lord Farquaad castle it looks very clinical with an NCP style car park. It has parking bays and mapped out areas. It seems very

‘touristy’ with signposts and a singing welcome box; everything has Lord Farquaad on it which strongly send the message that he has a tremendous ego.

Lord Farquaad’s castle is very tall towering high into the sky. When Shrek and Donkey visit Lord Farquaad’s castle they are immediately drawn into a tournament. Shrek keeps very calm about this and simply says ‘can’t we just settle this over a pint?’ This is another sign that Shrek’s not your average ogre as he wants to settle things calmly and adult like. The fight commences when the knights charge full on towards him and loud rock music starts to play. The sensible behaviour, at first, that Shrek’s displays is completely out of character for what we expect. Donkey on the other hand is like a child ‘egging’ his friend on to fight.

Usually it would be the other way round and Shrek would be ready for fighting and Donkey would be the one saying ‘now lets just be sensible’. The film is the complete opposite to a traditional fairytale as the ogre would be the one causing havoc. You would expect a majestic prince to go wading in and settle this debate but none of this happens. Lord Farquaad stays out of harm’s way when Shrek wins the fight with the knights. Lord Farquaad has all the crossbows aimed at Shrek and Donkey. Lord Farquaad seems to get other people to do his work for him and won’t put him self in danger like a normal Lord or Prince would.

In conclusion I think that Shrek’s character is not a typical ogre. In traditional fairytales the ogre is scary, mean and usually kills and eats people, (also the ogre doesn’t usually marry the princess). DreamWorks have completely

changed our traditional expectations. This was also done for Lord Farquaad. In traditional fairytales a prince is supposed to be tall, dark, handsome and kind. Lord Farquaad is the complete opposite.

He is a ‘ villain’ in the story. He has a torture chamber which you would definitely not expect from a ‘ prince’. The director was very clever to swap Shrek’s and Lord Farquaad’s personalities around. It has made a much more interesting story and personally I don’t think it would have been as popular as it is now without doing so. This film appeals to all the family from toddlers to OAPs.

The intended message in ‘ Shrek’ is “ don’t judge a book by its cover” meaning don’t judge someone before you truly know them. People looked at Shrek and would think he was going to eat them, but deep down he is a nice ogre and definitely not traditional. I whole heartedly agree with the critics ‘ Shrek’ is definitely “ The Greatest Fairytale Never Told! ”