

The shawshank redemption argumentative



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The 'Shawshank Redemption' is a powerful film that displays many emotions predominately hope and despair. The directors of this film have used a range of tools to highlight these emotions, they are shown by: camera techniques, lighting, imagery and suggestion. It is possible that what you can't see suggests a more powerful action than what you can. The despair in this film is from the inmates, their lives and their treatment alongside the hope of the inmates, their lives, their dreams and in some cases their release. For example Brooks was despairing about his release against Red's anticipation to be released. In Shawshank prison two sorts of people were inflicting this despair; the prison officials and some of the convicts that had been at Shawshank for a long time, for example 'the Sisters' who together sexually harassed Andy because he was a 'new fish'.

However they stopped when 'Boggs' (the ring leader) was beaten and sent away. The first time we see a strange contrast between hope and despair is when the roof of the prison is being tarmaced by 'Red', his friends and Andy. When the warden is selecting men to work, names are being called out; the atmosphere is light, easygoing and full of hope. If their name is called out they spend a week outside in the sun, if not they have to return to the 'woodshop'. The atmosphere could be light because the music over this scene was upbeat and the people chosen (Red and Co) were laughing and genial (under their breath).

When the men are on the roof in their blue-grey uniform, sweat dripping down their faces from the heat and over work, we can feel despair for them, but it is a hopeful thing! They can see the sky, the sky is clear and the sun is in the sky, for the inmates this is better than the dull-grey of the woodshop.

Being on the roof is more like real life. The roofers realise that their reward is personal not financial, and Andy overhears that the chief guard has a financial problem. Andy realises that he can use this to his advantage and asks the guard if he " trusted his wife? " the guard misread the question and we can see the despair of being misunderstood in Andy's eyes as he is dangled two hundred feet above the ground.

Once Andy has explained his reasoning they make a deal. This shows an unnatural unity between the guard and the prisoner. If Andy had not been so optimistic and hopeful he may not have realised his use to the guard, this is an indication of how hope can help us see things in a different way. Letting the men have a cold beer as Andy's reward lets the prisoners have the feeling of freedom again as if they were " tarmac the roofs of their own homes" even though Andy doesn't drink he still asks for beer, it made him feel good and it lifted the spirits of everyone, which to Andy was a better reward.

When Brooks (a long term prisoner) was released, instead of feeling hopeful and optimistic he felt full of despair, he even tried to kill Heywood (another inmate) so that he wouldn't have to leave prison, where he was safe, useful and important. We can see his despair when he cries, the tears of a broken man. When he is released he is cautiously optimistic. When he is on the public bus he is holding his suit case close and protectively, like Andy was on the way into jail, at that point Andy should have felt despairing.

Brooks was on his way out and was feeling despairing, when in reality she should have felt positive and hopeful. His first impressions lead him to

depression “ the world is in a hurry”, the cars are too fast for him and the duty manager at the shop he worked in didn't like him. He fed the birds in the park as an outlet; he kept hoping that Jake (the bird he looked after in Shawshank) would come while he was there. At that time Brooks needed familiarity and love. Brooks wanted to break his parole by committing crimes that will send him back to Shawshank, but he didn't want to kill anybody. Eventually his life and the gloomy bed sit and his new life become too much for him.

Any hope he may have had turned to despair. So he hung himself to escape his depression and misery. One of the most uplifting and powerful scenes is when Andy receives a government grant, he unpacks second hand books and discovers some records as well. He had written hundreds of letters to achieve this, he never gave up hope and it all paid off. He intended to start a library- an action that would have an impact on everyone, not just him. He decided to take a risk and plays a classical piece over the loud speakers.

He is aware that his actions would ‘ free’ everyone but at a price. When the music was played everyone stopped. You can see the realisation of hope in everyman in the confinement. Camera shots from different angles show the many expressions. In the recreation ground, we see hundreds of convicts look at the speakers, as if looking to heaven, in innocence and hope. The narrator (Red) says “ it was like a bird had flown around the walls and they had dissolved away.

” No other words could describe the feeling as well. The audience can see and hear and feel the hope gravitating off these people. Andy was severely

punished by being put in ' the hold' for two weeks for playing the music, but after he said " it was the easiest time I ever did". Again we see Andy's strength and determination all based on hope. Both hope and despair can be contagious, and Andy's hope over the film started to rub off on the other inmates. For example Tommy, he appears to be a no hoper but manages, with Andy's help achieved a high school diploma.

He also realises that he knows the truth about Andy's crime and that he is innocent. This gives Andy immense hope; he thinks that Tommy's testimony will release him from Shawshank. However the warden is reluctant and Andy loses his temper and calls the warden " obtuse" and as a result is given a MONTH in the hold. At this point the audience feel horrified because a month in the hold seems inhumane and they worry that the punishment could break Andy's spirit. The warden investigates Andy's story.

He asks if his story is true and Tommy says he would swear it in front of the law. The warden then gives the order to shoot Tommy. The warden could have helped Andy but he didn't because he wanted to break Andy's hope. After Tommy's death the warden goes to Andy, tells him that he is shutting down the library, and then, to demonstrate his control, the warden gives Andy another month in the hold to squash any hope he had. Even though most of the audience have not experienced two months in solitary confinement, the directors want you to imagine Andy's pain.

The warden locked Andy up for so long because Andy challenged his authority and values. The warden never expected any worth from the inmates; he was miserable and had a bleak outlook on life. When Andy came

to Shawshank, he was too hopeful and persistent for the wardens liking. I believe that the character of the warden thrived on despair but couldn't handle hope; therefore eliminated hope in any way possible.

Just as we think that Andy has given up all hope he escapes, proving that Andy's hopeful spirit could not be defeated. I think that all of Andy's actions were to the benefit of his inmates. E. G. playing the music made the inmates feel freedom and helping Tommy pass his high school diploma so that he could look after his daughter.

However most of Andy's actions backfired. For example he was given two months in the hold for playing the music and once Tommy passed his diploma he was shot. I think that the directors want the audience to subconsciously will Andy to keep persisting because if he had stopped his sustained hope could easily have turned to despair. Just like Brooks. At one point in the film Andy gave up hope but Red who seemed like a despairing character lifted his spirit and that is how he found the will power to escape. I also think that the voice of Red over the film brought out how hopeful Andy was and if the narrating voice wasn't there the audience could have missed the point of the story.