

How does Spielberg
use different film
techniques in the
opening of 'Saving
Private Ryan'...



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Steven Spielberg's ' Saving Private Ryan' is an incredibly violent and brutal film.

In the opening of ' Saving Private Ryan', Spielberg uses many film techniques to show the atrocities that happened in World War II, such as the landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day in 1944. The film starts off with the title ' Saving Private Ryan.' It starts off like this to show the title of the film and show what the film is going to be about. In some films they show a bit of the film and then show the title. But Spielberg didn't want to do this. This shows the film might be really exciting and interesting to watch.

' Saving Private Ryan' is written in white lettering against a black background. The black background symbolises the people who died in the war. The white lettering symbolises the few people who did survive in the war. While we see the title sequence we can hear classical music in the background.

This non-diegetic sound also has a lone trumpet in it which shows the opening of the film. When the black background fades away, we see a faded American flag flapping in the air. The light can be seen through the flag. The flag itself symbolises glory, goodness and victory. The faded colours again may represent the fallen soldiers of D-Day. We then see the camera following someone's footsteps.

It slowly, slowly rises to show an aged man walking towards the French cemetery. We know that this is a French cemetery because there is a French flag flapping in the air. The camera follows the man and shows that he is

walking separately from his family. This may symbolise the experiences he had, maybe during the war. In the next shot, he is still walking by himself.

It's as if he is trying to reveal his memories. We can hear the non-diegetic sound of the sea lapping. The aged man might be thinking about what happened in the past. That's why he seems as if he doesn't know what's going on around him because he is buried in some deep thought.

It is also calm in contrast to later sounds in the film. When the man walks into the cemetery, the camera is tracking the man backwards. We can also see that he is limping which shows he has been hurt in the war. In this sequence so far, no one has spoken.

In fact the only thing said in this sequence is 'dad'. I personally think that this is not effective because it doesn't give any information to us about the characters at the beginning. But we do know that these characters might come later on in the film because Spielberg has focused on them from the start. The phrase 'dad' is said by the man's son, when his 'dad' collapses by a grave. The man collapses to show his loneliness.

He also might not be able to take in how many men who died in the war. This is shown when Spielberg uses different camera shots to show rows of crosses that symbolise the soldiers who died in the war. While the trumpet is playing we can also hear strings which give a haunting feeling to the scene. The last image we see in this sequence is the man surrounded by his family.

The camera slowly and carefully zooms into an extreme close-up of the man's tearful eyes. All the non-diegetic sound starts to fade out and once

again it is replaced by the lapping of the waves. This is acting like a sound bridge to when the soldiers land on Omaha Beach. In this shot the non-diegetic sound goes and we can hear diegetic sound. On the boat men are standing on both sides.

In the middle is a man who seems to be the Captain (Tom Hanks). We get an extreme close-up on the Captain's hands when he is opening his flask for a drink. When he is doing this his hands are shaky. This shows how scared he is.

The men on the boat are vomiting. The colours are so dull that we cannot even see their faces that clearly. When the Americans land on the Beach, we hear sounds of bombs exploding, gunshots people screaming and so on. The volume gets louder. This is to show what it was like in the war.

The Germans are at a higher level than the Americans. To show this Spielberg uses a high angle shot which looks down onto the Americans. This makes the Germans feel more powerful than the Americans. When we get the shot from the Americans side, Spielberg uses a low angle shot looking up at the Germans.

This makes the Americans feel weak and hopeless. All the way through this sequence, the camera is hand held. This makes you feel like you are one of the soldiers and makes the film look realistic. It shows the American side more than the German side, to make us feel sorry for the Americans.

Everyone is running around, shouting, screaming, and panicking to help each other.

After a while another boat comes in with the Captain. As they are coming, they get fired at straight away. We then see the Captain again., the quality of the film changes.

It shows the Captain thinking. He looks around, watching people dying and soldiers helping one another. The diegetic sound is muffled. We get an extreme close-up on the Captain's face, for a little while. When the Captain puts his helmet back on the film goes back to normal. You can hear the shooting and the people screaming.

This is all off screen sound. The Captain decides to go to the Shingle. He leads the soldiers to the Shingle. On the way to the Shingle we can hear non-diegetic sound of someone breathing.

This again makes us feel like we are one of the soldiers. This also makes us feel that we are inside of a soldier. This makes the film look realistic. When they arrive at the Shingle we get a close-up on the Captain again.

The colours are dark so we cannot see their faces clearly. The camera is close to the floor, like the soldiers. Meanwhile back at the Beach, the Americans are trying as hard as they can to help one another. We get a high angle shot when the medics are helping a soldier to survive. We get the same shot again but this time the camera seems to be lying on the floor as if it were dead like the soldiers. The Shingle blows up.

The Captain and the soldiers go to a safe place near the German Tower. The shots seem to get shorter. This is telling us that that this whole sequence is coming to an end. When the Captain and the soldiers were running to a safe

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place, the camera seemed to back away. Maybe because it feels safer because where the soldiers are running, is where the bombs are getting thrown.

Also the editing changes to. The Captain then orders for a soldier to do the Sniper attack. Before the soldier leaves to do the attack he kisses his necklace which has a cross on it. He does this for protection and good luck. We then see different shots of people praying for different reasons, such as asking for protection, bravery, luck and many other things. Meanwhile the soldier who is supposed to be doing the attack prays before shooting.

When he shoots he kills some of the Germans. When the soldier shoots, all the Americans run towards the German Tower. When they get there, the Germans and the Americans are on the same level. This shows that neither of them is more powerful. We get a high angle shot from the American side when they are on the German Tower. This shows that the Americans are more powerful than the Germans.

As the Americans start to become more powerful, they become nastier and where ever you look, you can only see Americans. The techniques start to change as well. We see a soldier crying, he is probably feeling scared and lonely because he must have lost many friends in the war. We then see a soldier collecting soil.

He puts it in his bag, where we can see other tins with names of other countries on them. This shows that he has been to many places to fight. He is also wearing a ring which shows that he left his family to fight in the war.

He is not the only one who left his family behind but many other soldiers
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have family waiting for them to come back. We then get a close-up on the Captain's shaky hands.

He is repeating what he did at the beginning of the sequence. We then get an extreme close-up on the Captain's eyes. Again at the beginning of the sequence we had an extreme close up on the man's eyes. So this tells us that it is nearly the end of the sequence.

When we get the extreme close-up on the eyes, the diegetic sound goes and once again we can hear non-diegetic sound. This also shows that it is the end of the sequence. The camera gives a panning of the Beach.