

# Winter's bone(2010) - realism essay sample

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## WINTER'S BONE (2010) -REALISM

Realism, as we know, is all about being truthful, and a realist will strive to preserve the point that their film is devoid of manipulations, and mirror the actual world. They try to engage amateurs to play the characters, use existing buildings or outdoor locations, and develop a theme based on everyday life. Historical movies are normally shot in black-and-white to elicit authenticity. The snippets of the World Wars, sets an example for these realists to corroborate such techniques into their movies, so that they too, breathe realism. Having said this, it does not surprise us when we look at movies such as Schindler's List, or the more contemporary Paranormal Activity.

In Films, lights are used to draw the audience's attention. In outdoor shooting, most of the scenes are lit by sunlight, or when situations warrant, by powerful studio lights. Every scene has its own unique importance, and these situations have to be carefully manipulated by lighting to influence the audience's reaction. The angle and direction of light can give the shot a unique effect, and it gives the audience an idea of what time of the day, and where, the action is taking place. It is because of this, that lighting is accorded the highest priority. It is also the major source for influencing the perception of a viewer.

In movies set in modern times, there are many ways directors can special effects to bring amazingly, captivating scenes in a movie that stays embedded in the memory of the audience. In a similar vein, many directors have focused on lighting to bring originality to their scenes. The use of black-and-white presentations may seem out of fashion or inconsequentially, stale.

However, for the majority of people who are accustomed to watching movies in color, the scenes in black-and-white do instill a sense of originality in them. Schindler's List is a movie that uses black-and-white presentation effectively to evoke a sense of originality, and deepens the impact of the story.

Paranormal Activity is another movie that uses black-and-white to spur the audience's imagination to the extent of making them believe its authenticity. The use of lighting, including the use of gray and dark frames during a movie gives directors the opportunity to use colors sparingly to highlight important scenes and denote shifts in time. For example, in Schindler's List, after the opening scene, which is in color, only a few other scenes are in color that gradually fade into black-and-white in the following scenes. Movies such as Schindler's List, and Paranormal Activity, present an eclectic mix of styles that are like film noir.

Hollywood, in all its glory, is known to churn out movies by the dozen that cosmetically show a pseudonymical portrayal of American life. Honestly, it takes a lot of effort to do that, and to bring authenticity in their characters and environment, it needs technological expertise, which only Hollywood can boast of at present. Winter's Bone is a movie that strives to induce realism through lighting. Directed by Debra Granik, Winter's Bone is an adaptation of a novel written by Daniel Woodrell, which it tries to replicate in the most realistic manner possible. The movie was shot in the Ozarks, often in the homes of the people who live there.

The success of a movie can be attributed to a number of factors, not least of all the techniques used to inject realism. A lot of hard work goes into developing aestheticism in movies, and movies such as Winter's Bone, uses

lighting to create visual realism in shots, moments, and scenes commendably. The effect of manipulating light is so strong, that it can modify scene appearances into time-lapse sequences. A very touching movie, Winter's Bone portrays, or tries to portray realistic characters who act in all seriousness to amalgamate authenticity. Since the movie focuses on psychological elements such as, fear, mistrust, bleakness, loss of innocence, and despair, it is imperative that the director employed special techniques to bring life to his characters and environment. Considering the thematic background, the movie obviously had to be shot in places where light was insignificant. It would be hard to see fear, mistrust, bleakness, loss of innocence, and despair happening in bright light, and if they were, the movie would have lost its sheen of originality.

Just like how documentary-style production has allowed movie producer to make movies look exceptional authentic and make-believe, the clever use of light and shade has helped movie producers make their movies look visually realistic. It is these effects which make the movie look authentic and emotional. While it would be difficult to compare a print version to a film, movies have all the essence to create an emotional impact on their audience. By introducing special effects, movies have been very successful in dramatizing the major scenes to leave an impression on its audience. The artistic advantage of lighting in black and white heightens the impact of the film's violence, highlights the duality of good vs. Evil, and enhances originality. The mix of lighting and contrast enhance the brutality of each violent scene in Winter's Bone.

Winter's Bone was shot in a scanty and impoverished rural township in the

Ozark Mountains of Southern Missouri. The film is strewn with attributes such as, despair, loneliness and dread. Since the movie dwells on blackmail, accusation, theft and drug trafficking, it is obvious that the money has to be shot in highly gullible settings. The movie, though shot in colour, employs a mixture of light to drain the freshness of the plants and leaves, and the buildings and terrain surrounding them; it creates a picture of natural wilderness. When Ree Dolly walks through the barren terrain by her Uncle Teardrop's house, and manoeuvre her way between small burnt-out cabins and the detritus of nearby buildings and farmyard wreckage, reality is ushered in through a series of long-shots and the use of dark, gray lighting. There are also a number of skeletal trees dominating scenes throughout the movie, and in one scene where the camera focuses on a diminutive figure of Ree in the far distance with these pointed silhouettes in the foreground, they appear to loom over her small figure, realistic image is created.

In addition to the above scene, there are a number of scenes where a mixture of lighting was employed to make them look real. The movie employs dark, gray lighting during scenes depicting violence, and when something positive develops in the case with Ree for example, the lighting changes to shades of softer or golden color, rather than dark gray or blue, and then there is the use of harsh lighting to give life and add emotional weight to the plot, and then there is the use of blurred lighting from time to time to indicate that the situation is rather fluid. The scene in the bar, the abduction, and the standoff between Teardrop and a police-officer, for example, used chiaroscuro lighting. Chiaroscuro lighting has been used widely in movies to induce a dramatic effect. These lightings are conspicuous

by their contrasting dark and light outcomes. It is often used in a bold manner to generate realism. People talking under the shadow of an object or a flicker of light from a streetlight hitting the figure of an obscured person are common film noir scenes.

Some of the other scenes that rivet with authenticity is the scene where Ree, fresh off a beating and heavily drugged, dreams of squirrels cavorting in the forest in black-and-white, enticing her viewers to come face-to-face with her subjectivity. Here, the lighting doesn't just give originality to the scene, but it also radiates the mood of the actor. Even though the movie was shot in the bleak hills of Missouri, with dead trees and dilapidated houses, the film has its share of very dark scenes, like the scene where the scars and freshly bloodied wounds on Ree's face are completely visible, even in the dimly-lit scene. When law makers arrive at Ree's home, the lighting becomes particularly pale and shady, suggesting that something is amiss with the local judiciary. Then, there is the scene when Ree and her uncle are approached by the local sheriff. It would be hard to miss the fractured ray of light seeping through the truck's window and mirror, mirroring the abject policing system there. In one eerie scene that takes place out in open country, when Ree goes to meet a person to get information about her father and is taken to a burned-out 'crank house,' is shrouded in mystery and appropriately lighted to give it the silent, abysmal feeling. Finally, just before the end of the movie, when the movie moves to its logical conclusion, the lighting seems to grow brighter than ever before, lending credence to the fact that justice will prevail after all.

It would be hard to analyze how the movie would have been without the use

of lighting to denote the varying moods and themes projected by the director. It required immense consistency to portray the varying moods and situations of the movie, and this worked well when one considered the time-frame of the movie. The long shots had to be well supported with proper lighting to give it the authenticity to make-believe.

## **Conclusion**

It came as no surprise that Winter's Bone won several awards including the Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic Film at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. It was also nominated for a host of other Academy Awards, which included, the nomination for the best picture, best screenplay, and best actress, and best supporting actor. The movie, directed by Debra Granik, strives to preserve its originality through a number of techniques, including, through the manipulation of lighting.

Movies made in modern times, use the camera and lights to bring amazingly, captivating scenes that stay embedded in the minds of the audience. The use of black-and-white presentations may seem out of fashion, but for the majority of people who are accustomed to watching movies in color, the scenes in black-and-white do instil a sense of originality in them.

For example, in movies such as Schindler's List, and Paranormal Activity, the manipulation of color and light has greatly affected the thoughts of their viewers. It does add a sense of originality to the scene, and present an eclectic mix of styles that are like film noir.