

Citizen kane essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A great film is composed of a series of conventions that make it interesting and enigmatic to watch. A plot is needed so the viewer does not lose interest; realistic characters enable the viewer to identify or form a relationship with them; and good actors need to be well chosen for the respective part.

A good film also needs to be visually appealing. With the increasing technology we have today, edits and special effects have a significant impact on the success of the film and when used effectively can transform scenes. Finally, dialogue is another essential feature. A well written script makes a great film and makes it worth seeing multiple times, some films even have lines that have become famous and well known and are repeated by fans. Citizen Kane ranks to this day as a classic masterpiece of cinematic form, with its many remarkable scenes and performances; it's cinematic and narrative techniques and in it's experimental use in photography, editing, and sound. It has been regarded as a milestone in the development of cinematic technique.

It uses film as an art form to communicate and display a non-static view of life with techniques that include the use of a subjective camera and unconventional lighting. I understand however, why it may be hard to consider the film so great, as it is a difficult undertaking for someone of modern generation to watch a film like Citizen Kane. Not necessarily because it's too old, but because it has been hailed almost universally as the single best motion picture ever made. Therefore, whilst the anticipation of seeing a film with such overwhelming acclaim may be quite exhilarating, actually

watching it could quite possibly be an intimidating and somewhat disappointing experience.

This is not because it is a bad film, in fact, Citizen Kane is a meticulously planned achievement in all areas of film making, yet it would not live up to expectations. The story is slow compared to today's standards, and there is no real Hearst character alive today in which to relate. So the story on the surface is outdated which is why it might be hard for today's audience to see a film made in 1941 great. The film, budgeted at \$800, 000, received unanimous critical praise even at the time of its release, although it was not a commercial success, until it was re-released after World War II, and then played on television. The film created controversy before it premiered in New York City, 1941, because it appeared to fictionalize and caricaturize certain events and individuals in the life of William Randolph Hearst – a powerful newspaper tycoon and publisher.

The film was accused of drawing remarkable, unflattering, and uncomplimentary parallels to real-life. A gossip columnist Louella Parsons persuaded her newspaper boss Hearst that he was being slandered by RKO and Orson Welles' film when it was first previewed, so the Hearst-owned newspapers pressured theatres to boycott the film and also threatened libel lawsuits. Hearst also ordered his publications to completely ignore the film, and not accept advertising for other RKO projects. However, the title character Charles Foster Kane is mostly a composite of any number of powerful, influential American individualists and financial barons in the early 20th century.

By contrast, the real-life Hearst was born into wealth, whereas Kane was of humble birth. Welles' film was the recipient of nine Oscar nominations but with only one win, Best Original Screenplay. With his four Academy Awards nominations, Welles became the first individual to receive simultaneous nominations in those four categories. The innovative, bold film is acknowledged down to many factors, a primary factor being the use of some camera angles and shots which are very effective. Using a wide-angle lens was accredited as it allowed ceilings to be part of the shots, which had not been seen before.

It meant that camera angles could be from almost anywhere and not have to account for the lack of a roof. This emphasised the power or weakness of a character, and the mood of a scene thus helped with characterization and atmosphere. This type of shot can be seen when Kane is opening up his presents at Christmas. The shots of Kane are taken from up high and he was being looked down on, so a sense of threat and power were highlighted by this camera angle technique.

Deep focus was also an effect used which allowed the camera to not only see foreground but background as well. It was a very new idea to the world of film and was not possible before the creation of this wide-angle lens. It helped emphasise relationships between people as if the further they were away on screen, the further they were away from the other person, in the film. One of the best examples of this is the childhood scene when Kane's parents are at the front of the shot and Kane is outside playing in the snow, which we can see clearly through a small window in the centre of the screen.

Kane does not have a care in the world and we can hear him shouting over the tops of the voices in the foreground.

This is strongly juxtaposed in the foreground as the atmosphere is serious as the parents are discussing Kane's future whilst he is oblivious. The distance between the parents and Kane on screen is also symbolic to the distance between them in their relationships in real life because at that point Kane is about to be taken away to live with someone else. The film used numerous short, sharp shots to grab the viewer's attention, a montage, and this was very effective in the film. The fact that the film covered Kane's whole life meant it needed to go through years of his life in a short period of time, and the use of montage made this possible.

It showed the importance of something, or told us part of the story line by giving out information through snapshots, which, when linked, spoke volumes. In the newsreel, there was a montage of newspaper telling us of his death. There are papers from all over the world, showing how famous he actually was. This tells part of the story line but also shows the importance in just one shot. There is also use of montage when the newsreel is showing Kane's huge palace for a home.

The shots just wipe off one after another and every shot is different so we can only imagine the actual size of the place. Some of the other techniques used were the unusual camera angles and the use of triangular shapes in some scenes. When we see Kane's death at the start, we see the maid come into the room through the reflection of a mirror. This was a completely new concept because no one had ever thought to film through mirrors or

windows. The atmosphere and setting are crucial to this film in that it helps to create the mood of a scene. The film begins with a dark, gloomy and unclear scene.

There is a mist in the air as the camera is filming parts in darkness. It is very confusing, almost like Kane's life and it shows a mental weakness, that he has to buy all these outrageous things to give meaning to his life. The huge 'K' on the gate and the 'No Trespassers' sign represent the loneliness of Kane and it is just a forefront of his power to cover up his weaknesses. Then the camera slowly creeps up towards one window that has a single light on. The music is slow and threatening which signifies that something is about to happen.

The light suddenly goes out and then comes back on seconds later. It is at this point when Kane dies, but we could almost tell something bad was going to happen, by the mood of the scene.