

Let him have it



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

n this film " Let him have it" how does the director, Peter Medak, encourage the audience to feel sympathy for Derek Bentley and hisfamily? Refer to three specific episodes from the film in you answer. " Let him have it" by Peter Medak is a very powerful film based on a controversial true story. The narrative is about a murder committed by Christopher Craig and Derek Bentley.

Peter Medak, the Director, explained " I made this film to break hearts" and the way the scenes have been established and portrayed by the actors increase the emotional response of the viewer. The reason that this film is so effective is due to the amount of emotion and sympathy the Director portrays towards Derek Bentley. However, the film has a distinct bias towards Derek Bentley as it follows his characterisation compared to that of the other actors. Within this essay I will draw out the techniques the Director has uses to create a truly emotive production.

I have chosen three episodes from the film wherel believethe Director has emphasised the sympathy towards Derek and his family most effectively; the opening chapter, this depicts Derek when he was a young boy during World War II, the murder of the police officer, this is when Derek and Chris Craig attempt to break into a premises and the hanging. As the film opens it immediately provides the feeling of; sadness, sorrow, grief and unhappiness. The background to the credits are pitch black and the credits are written in old style, types set with white writing, establishing the feeling that the film is set in the past.

The background music is sad, gentle and to some extent slightly emotional providing a sense of unhappiness. As the credits continue, the music gets louder and louder. This creates suspense in the audience, making the viewer believe that something is going to happen. The credits dissipate and then we can hear bomb blasts, providing an indication that the first scene is going to be set during a war. This is effective because we can imagine the scene from the sound before we can view it. The first scene reveals the trauma suffered by people living in London during World War II.

As the camera pans the set it shows the demolished houses and the devastated families with their personal belongings scattered over the rubble. This creates a strong emotional response in the viewer for all of the people caught up in the air raid that has hit the street. The camera pans across a demolished house and the distraught family and then focuses into a close-up shot of a mother crying over her dead child. A lady calls for help, the attention is focused upon the lady shouting, " I have found him", as they lift the rubble away, revealing Derek for the first time.

The scene reveals a helpless, weak and vulnerable young boy surrounded by rubble and covered in dust. The Director increases the emotive effect of the scene by lighting the child's face and zooming into the boy, which then reveals blood seeping out of his ear. The boy starts to shake and fit, this completed the effect the Director was aiming for, to create the initial sympathy for Derek. The trauma Derek experienced within the first scene could provide the reasons for his learning difficulties and disability.

The Director has built this scene to explain to the audience what is happening to Derek and to create sympathy for him due to this incident, although at this stage it is unclear that he is suffering from. The Director has clearly identified this scene to underpin the whole film and I believe it provides a very descriptive and highly emotive start to the film. The film transports the viewer to when Derek was 19 years old, this is expertly delivered by focusing in on Derek in the rubble, followed by a close up of Derek as a teenager and pans out to show who he is with.

The boys are about to break into an old person's shed, the mood is sad and sombre. The music is slow and deliberate, using the 'minor keys' making this scene uncomfortable and provides the feeling that something bad is going to happen. Then you see the boys breaking into the old person's sheds, the lighting suggests Derek's innocence due to him being highlighted and the boys shadowed. The music gets louder and louder when the boys are vandalising the shed. Derek had no intentions of going into the old person's shed until one of the boys encouraged him, " Hoy Derek".

The Director is showing the audience how easily led and vulnerable Derek is whilst under the influence of others, which could be due to Derek's learning disability. It looks obvious throughout the scene that Derek is playing and he does not understand what he is doing wrong. He is trying to be part of the gang. During the scene Derek tries to eat the old person's supper that the other boys ruined with coffee, this is out of character for him and supports the conclusion that he is trying to fit in.

When the man comes back the rest of the boys flee but Derek just freezes, he then starts fitting. This scene is powerful due to the high camera shot indicating his harmlessness and his lack of power. The Director uses this technique to establish sympathy for Derek, so you feel that he is just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The scene shows how the character of Derek is fragile and how easily he gives into peer pressure. This provides the impression of weakness within his character.

The Director has again uses this scene to depict the major events that affect Derek's life and sets the scene of how Derek ends up in Kingswood Approved School (a young offender's institute) and raises the question as to whether it is his fault that he is in there. The scene has a big impact on the film; the audience would not feel as much sympathy for Derek because they may think that he was ill-disciplined and badly behaved for being in the institute.

In the institute the music starts slowly to create sadness in the audience, as the camera tracks through the institute to a long shot of Derek in a long narrow corridor. This makes him look alone, harmless and sad as if he is waiting to be disciplined by the Head Master of the institute. The following scene is of Derek's father and the Head Warden in the office discussing Derek's low intelligence and his disability, epilepsy. This make the audience feel sympathy for Derek because he has been categorised and is not capable of fitting into a young offenders institute.

Derek needs specialist help, which he never appears to receive. After Derek is released from the Institute he takes it upon himself to become reclusive and agoraphobic probably due to this being easier than facing life and its

dangers. It takes a lot of persuasion by his sister, whom he loves, to overcome this feeling and become more extravert. This also provides the audience with the impression that he feels unwanted because of being rejected from the school. This could have resulted in how easy it was for Derek to join Chris's gang, because he felt wanted.

Prior to the scene where Derek and Chris attempt to break in to the butchers shop, Derek is portrayed as someone who is trying to fit in and that is why he takes the keys to the shop. Throughout this scene there is clear evidence that Derek does not realise the potential implications of what he is doing, he believes he was only having fun. When Derek hands over the keys to Chris he comments, " you be in charge Chris," as if he is a child. As they jump off the bus the boys play together, just like young children.

Chris then hands a knuckle duster to Derek; he takes it like a child taking a new toy from his parents. This helps establish to the audience that Derek's intention on the roof was not to kill but to just follow the gang and try to be one of them, as portrayed in the gangster movies that the boys watched at the cinemas, prior to this scene. Chris applies a great deal of peer pressure to Derek, " are we going to do this or are you going to piss off too? " this shows how easily he is led by Chris.

The Director shows a family observing Chris and Derek climbing up the fence, they immediately call the police. The audience is now aware that the police are coming; it also creates suspense, as you wonder what will happen to Derek and Chris if they get caught. The Director keeps switching to the police and their movements setting the scene for what is about to happen.

The viewers can see the level of police presence surrounding the boys where as Chris and Derek are completely unaware as they are playing on the roof, running around like children catching each other in a school playground.

When Derek and Chris are surrounded by the police, Derek exclaims, " my dad is going to kill me", he could not think of anything worse than being reprimanded by his father. A police officer enters the roof and Derek struggles with Chris to try to prevent him shooting him, he warns the officer that Chris has a gun. Derek does not move when he was warned to stay still by the officer. It is at this stage when a critical point of the whole film is depicted, the officer asks Chris for the gun. Derek shouts to Chris " let him have it" meaning to give the gun to the officer; however Chris shoots the officer.

Throughout this scene, Derek is portrayed as trying to help. The audience can feel sympathy for Derek because when he is trying to be of assistance but is being pushed around by the police. The audience do not feel as much sympathy for the policeman as they do for Derek because the viewer does not know about the officer's background, as we do with Derek, he is not characterised. The Director makes it very clear that Derek does intend to hurt or kill anyone and has no animosity towards the police officer. The Director shows a clear bias towards Derek in the way the scene is depicted.

The audience could feel some sympathy for Chris because his brother has just been sent to prison; he shouted " you gave my brother twelve years". It is effective when the Director shows a close up of all the policemen loading up their guns, and showing Chris loading his gun with six bullets, to show

how outnumbered Chris is compared to the police. When the Police Officer was murdered, the Director includes a close up of all of the faces looking at the body, Derek was shocked, sad and stunned at what Chris had committed.

When Derek walks towards the body he looks physically shaken, the viewer can feel a lot of sympathy towards him because he is genuinely sorry for the policemen. Derek knelt by the policeman's side, lowering himself down to his level, to show his respects towards the policeman. As the policemen take Derek away he does not resist arrest because it was never his intention to hurt anyone, after all he was just playing, or so he thought. In the third scene I have chosen, Derek and his family are awaiting the hanging. The Director creates a large amount of sympathy towards Derek and his family throughout the final episode.

Once again the lighting and camera position is used to increase the emotive effect of the scenes. After Derek is taken down, following the court case, Derek and Chris are in two different cells looking at each other, this is the first time in the film where the Director places Derek in the shade. This is because he fared worse following the court case due to his age compared to that of Chris and he is facing execution. In the scene just prior to the hanging a light is tracked from the window through to the bath full of letters showing the support received for Derek's cause.

The Director again is using this effect to show Derek's innocence, this creates sympathy in the audience as they know what is about to unfold and that it is unjust. When Derek's parents were informed that he should never

have been tried in a court of law because of his mental age, the audience feel pity towards him because of what he went through in court, the stress of it all, when he should never have been there in the first place. The audience feels sympathy when he says " I am not afraid to die"; it gives the impression that he has given up and accepted the fact that he will die. It also emphasises the fact that he is still a child inside.

The audience feels sorry for Mr. Bentley as the letter to the Queen is his last hope of saving his son. The Director has added this scene to depict the desperation of the Bentley family. During Derek's last conversation with his family he says goodbye as if he will never see them again, he tries to stay positive when his mum and dad are around " cheerio, see you tomorrow". The music in this scene gradually gets louder to increase the emotion between the family also increases the sympathy towards Derek and his family, especially when you realise Derek can not touch or kiss his family for the last ever time before the hanging.

They then place their hands together on either side of the glass barrier. Derek dictates his last words to a prison warden because he can not write for himself, he states in his letter to his mum " I tell you what mum, the truth has to come out, and when it does a lot of people will get hurt". As Derek dictates this the camera gradually zooms in as he signs his name showing that he is struggling to spell his name and has the handwriting of a child. The Director chooses to show a scene where Derek's dad is in his bedroom holding his toy aeroplane, waiting for a verdict, this reminds us that Derek is mentally still a child.

It makes you feel sorry for Derek because he is going to be executed for a crime that he would never be able to even conceive, never mind commit. You feel like they are hanging a child, an eleven year old child. What's more, in the scene the Director uses a close up of the officer scribing for Derek, the officer has a tear in his eye, as he sees the injustice unfolding. Within the execution scene there is a close up of the clock above the fireplace in the Bentleys house, this is very effective as it symbolises Derek's life ticking away.

Mr. Bentley walks out into the middle of the street making him look small and helpless, like he has given up all hope. The street looks long and lonely, a postman walks up to Mr. Bentley giving him a pat on the back saying " this is all today" this shows the contrast in letters. A couple of days before there had been hundreds of letters being delivered, but now there was only one letter. This tells the audience that even Derek's supporters have given up on the possibility of a reprieve.

As the clock is ticking away the camera delivers a high shot looking down on the family in the middle of their living room, hugging each other for comfort. The high shot makes them look helpless' you feel that there is nothing they can do to help Derek now. It makes the audience feel sorry for the family as they have tried everything they could; petitions, trying to get a retrial, writing to the queen etc, but in the end nothing had worked. The Director increases the sympathy for the family when he uses a close up of them crying together for Derek.

This is juxtaposed to Derek saying his prayer the Director shows the grieving and scared, sad Derek, to maximise the suspense and the sympathy for him and his family. Outside of the prison, protesters are singing hymns asking for God's mercy for Derek. The Director shows this shot of all the protesters singing, in front of the huge walls of the prison and a huge solid door. This shows that the protesters can't do anything for Derek but pray, sing and hope. This is creating sympathy for Derek because it is clear that everyone is on Derek's side even the officers inside the prison and the executioner.

The executioner says to Derek " everything is going to be alright" to provide him with some encouragement. When it is time for the execution a clock is ticking, this links Derek's scene to his families scene, then the clock strikes 9 o'clock and Derek's breathing becomes louder. This is creating the tension in the audience, and also showing how nervous and scared Derek is towards the execution. Derek does not struggle or shout protesting his innocence, if the director didn't show this the audience would not feel as much sympathy for him.

All the prison officers stopped working and after he was hung they bowed their heads showing their sadness for Derek. The protesters are now singing hymns for him as if they were at a funeral. When Derek is hung the camera closes in on his shoes in order to try to achieve the atmosphere, yet not showing the macabre hanging. The camera pans towards the light coming from the ceiling, as if Derek was escaping from the prison and going home or towards heaven. The camera flies over Derek's town into his bedroom and down the stairs, as if he was walking towards the living room to his family.

The camera makes the audience feel like Derek is now a ghost or an angle. The camera zooms in towards Derek's family together in the middle of the living room. Then over their shoulders to the clock on the mantelpiece, it stops ticking. This sequence of camera shots maximises the sympathy towards Derek and his family and creates an overwhelming feeling of injustice. The Director used multiple techniques in the film to create sympathy for Derek and his family for example; panning, high shot, low shots, close ups, body shots, etc.

The music throughout the film is similar, slow and, sad using the 'minor key' to create a slightly uncomfortable feeling. The lighting of Derek and the people around him, for example, Derek was predominantly in the light when he was around Chris, this suggests his innocence. The cumulative effect of the techniques creates a powerful, highly effective and emotive film which provides the viewer with a compulsion to keep watching and till the conclusion. After the conclusion the viewer is left with a true feeling of injustice and sadness especially when you find out it is based on a true story.