

Portfolio of Writing

Task 1- Manifesto Writing

Task 2- Observational Writing

Task 3- Practice Based writing

Long Piece of 1500 words

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Introduction- 277 words

Task 1- 425 words

Task 2- 494 words

Task 3- 305 words

Essay - 1501

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Introduction

The theme of the unexplained emphasises an area of human intrigue and curiosity, and goes beyond the boundaries of human understanding. This therefore makes it an adventurous topic to explore in film and can evoke the emotion of fear in an audience by emulating the atmosphere on screen. In my zoom project film 'Greed' I chose to explore human desire and selfishness through the relationship of two twins who are both as greedy as each other. In this project I wanted to create a manifestation of Greed in the form of possession. My aim was to show how the twins on screen are both consumed by their human desire, which in turn brings out the worst in them as people. I believe this is an effective way to emotionally impact an audience with fear, due to the relevance of greed within our society, as lots of people can relate to experiences of selfishness.

This story has been influenced by the 1927 silent film 'Sunrise' directed by F.W. Murnau. This film creates tense and fearful scenes as a husband is turned against his wife, manipulated by the selfish desire of another woman. This in turn causes the husband to almost murder his own wife on a boat trip. With the use of lighting and performance, the film brings out the worst of a character who looks and feels monstrous having been consumed by selfishness, especially since they have a young daughter. Therefore, in my own film 'Greed' This inspired me to explore the tense relationship dynamic between the two brothers on a zoom call which causes an unexplained manifestation of greed as a mechanism to build fear.

Manifesto Writing

When it comes to fear, there are many principles which can be used to further elevate this theme. And so one of the principles I intended to convey was the buildup of tension to create anticipation. Using tension is an effective way to create an emotional response of uneasiness when related to the theme of the unexplained. In a blog by John Francis McCullagh, he says that "Tension puts your audience on edge and makes them beg for relief. If you orchestrate the build-up well, that experience of relief can really elevate your storytelling" (McCullagh, 2018). For example, in my zoom project I create a build-up of tension using lighting, and create a blackout on one side of the zoom call. This suddenly puts the main protagonist in danger because while the two characters are located far from each other, they are digitally close on screen. Therefore there is a sense of danger lurking towards the protagonist, which links the theme of the unexplained as neither the audience or the characters on screen know what is going on.

As well as this, another principle of fear, is creating an aesthetic of the unknown. Throughout my zoom project, limited information is verbally given to the audience however, creating an aesthetic of the unknown through the duality of light and

darkness further emphasises this theme. This is because darkness is associated with things that are unclear or hidden, while light is the opposite. In an article by V Renee, it's stated that "low key lighting with a lot of contrast is great for communicating fear, anxiety, distrust, and evilness, while high key lighting with little contrast is great for communicating happiness, peacefulness, joy, and contentment" (V Renee 2017). And so this aesthetic helps to influence storytelling in relation to the theme of the unexplained. This is shown as I use shadows to create the appearance of an inhuman creature, a manifestation of greed, to bring in an element of horror.

Furthermore, another principle of fear is that, emotional attachments to characters intensifies fear amongst the audience in dangerous situations. According to Claire Bradshaw, "Every story must have stakes. Stakes (especially high ones) keep the plot moving, keep the characters growing and changing, and keep your readers engaged" (Claire Bradshaw). Creating dangerous situations for characters who the audience are connected to, can keep viewers tense and engaged as the plot progresses. In relation to the theme of the unexplained, this gives the flexibility to do the unexpected with storytelling, which makes the fear more impactful.

Observational Writing

For the use of locations for my zoom project, I took into account the use of semiotics and how that plays a role in storytelling. From my location studies, I analysed two different spaces and identified how using semiotics, can convey the theme of the unexplained. Within the space of what appears to be a mundane bedroom, I made sure to leave a large wardrobe to the right side of the frame on screen. This wardrobe takes up the majority of space to the right of the protagonist, and so I wanted to make it a sign of danger and of the unknown. With this wardrobe placed behind the protagonist, the audience will become aware of its eerie presence, whilst the main character is completely oblivious "Another method is to outright show off the danger. You build this tension by influencing the audience to ask "How will our heroes solve this problem?" (McCullagh, 2018). This quote influenced me to use creaky sound effects, neglected by the characters because of their arguments online, which builds anticipation for its eventual use at the climax of the film. In conclusion, the uncertainty of not knowing what is inside the wardrobe, creates tension and is used as a symbol of the unexplained.

Another step I took within my creative exploration was to find a way to symbolise isolation. This is a common trope within the horror conventions, and because this takes place on a zoom call in separate rooms, I wanted to express their distance apart as a way to convey the emotional distance between the brothers. As Maurielle McGarvey says in her blog "It has been human nature to view isolated space as negative or even frightening" (Maurielle McGarvey, 2020). I agree with this quote

because isolation from people is often frightening, especially in the context of a horror film. And so I use the symbolism of food to convey the separation of these characters. If one character is actively busy through eating and not just staring at the computer screen during conversation then the audience is more aware of their physical and mental separation, more so than simply being separated by frame.

As well as this, in order to further convey the theme of the unexplained, I created a silhouette of a claw like hand, hanging over the wardrobe in the centre of the frame. This claw is there throughout the whole film, and is used as a symbol to show that there is something unexplained which is a constant danger for the protagonist and never leaves his side. I also wanted to bring in an element of gothic horror to this project, and so using shadows was a good device to portray the threat looming over the characters. Overall, my understanding of semiotics has given me insight and practical use in the ways that I visually communicate messages and meaning to an audience, specifically that something within the story world is off-putting and unexplained.

Practice based writing

When visiting different test locations, the psychogeography helped to shape different story ideas relating to the theme of the unexplained. For instance, one of these locations was a kitchen. With the theme of the unexplained, and fear in mind, the story of a chef cooking for his parents, turned into a gruesome nightmare as everything that could go wrong in a kitchen, goes wrong. However the reason behind this appears to be supernatural and unexplainable. But with food being an important part of the setting, I imagined the human protagonist becoming the prey, and hunted by a supernatural predator. On a post by Alice Tomlinson, she says that "If you're looking to scare audiences, you need to create an atmosphere that is solidly associable with fear" (Alice Tomlinson, 2015). While I agree with this statement, I also think that flipping an environment that's as mundane as a kitchen, to a place of death and gore, is an effective way to show an exaggerated outlook on what a kitchen really is, which is the place where we prepare to eat the meat of dead animals. Therefore, showing this environment through the lens of being the prey in a common environment, is also effective in conveying the conventions of a genre.

Overall, this creative process helped to develop the story for my film 'Greed' and shows the importance of setting when it comes to a horror genre, but also any genre in film. Through the research I went through regarding the best ways to create an effective piece of work, I found that many universal devices are used regardless of the genre. For example, the build up of tension and having a certain aesthetic to films is always required as the best way to communicate to an audience, as it foreshadows and builds anticipations for any impactful moments.

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