Mid Stage 5 English student work sample – Grade B

Shrek – Critical Review

The movie, Shrek, is composed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jensen and is recommended to all ages. It uses a variety of techniques such as: Establishment scene, narrative line, characterization, dialogue, special effects, music, editing pace, animation, costumes and camera angles.

The fairy tale beginning ‘once upon a time’ establishes in the reader’s mind the kind of childhood context from there on; however the ripping of the page for the use of toilet paper, a type of juxtaposition allows the reader to realize that there is a mixture of adult, not only children, contexts. Characterisation is also used to project Shrek as a human being not an ogre in which he seems. He uses human morals and qualities, such as being able to see things from different points of view and accept them, for example when he says to the donkey, as he stereotyped the donkey to be scared of him, “grab your shovels and pitch-forks and head for the hills”.

The main narrative line is the quest that Shrek endeavours in trying to get his swap back. Like any other narrative line, it also uses background characters to add an extra quality to the movie, such as humor; for example the incident with King Farquaad and the Gingerbread man. The pace at which the movie travels to achieve the narrative line, also called editing pace, is quite slow, as it had to project the topic of time and context in which the movie was set; for example, when the villagers marched to Shrek’s house it projected a type of ancient context.

The dialogue is not too sophisticated, in order to satisfy the minors. It also represents that the movie is placed in an ancient context, for example, the use of the word ‘shillings’. However, there is also the use of modern gestures to entertain the adults.

The music corresponds the feelings of the characters in the centre of attraction, for example the “Death March” music played at the selling of the fairy tale creatures. It also provides suspense as it slowly rises to quick sudden sounds, for example the incident with Shrek and the villagers when they come to kill him.

The lighting focuses the attention of the viewer on specific things, for example, when Farquaad was being shown the bacheloresses. Also the use of night provides fear supposedly corresponding to Shrek.

The low angle shots of Shrek make him look powerful and controlling. The close ups of Shrek identify the ugliness of his face, for example, his weird ears and rotten teeth. The medium shot of the king and the guards, at the door, contrasts the king’s size to the others. This is ironic as the king is supposed to look down on everyone else.

The use of humor is a significant factor that contributes to entertaining the viewers, for example, when the gingerbread man says “eat me”. This is unexpected by the fairy tale animal and therefore makes it humorous to adults.

The costumes represent the middle ages, for example, the type of armour that the soldiers wore, the kings cloak and Shrek’s clothes. They allow the viewer’s mind to constantly be aware of the time and context of the movie.

Animation is widely used in Shrek to provide the setting. The mixture of the fairy tale creatures and the physical make-up of Shrek and the donkey entertain the children as it satisfies their standards.

I recommend “Shrek” to all ages as it has the ability and contains gestures and actions to satisfy adults and childrens. I would give the movie, four out of five stars for the use of such techniques.

Grade Commentary

Flynn has used a thorough knowledge of film techniques to analyse elements of the chosen film. A clear methodical structure and confident analysis of a wide selection of techniques, supported with examples, has been provided. An understanding of thematic concerns and their connection to society is evident and an increasing awareness of the audience’s preconceptions and expectations is apparent.

Flynn’s response demonstrates characteristics of work typically produced by a student performing at a grade B standard midway through Stage 5.