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Ms. Engelbert Pd. 2

Film As Literature

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Expressionism and *Edward Scissorhands*

A symbiotic relationship will always exist between film and literature, with the visual medium breathing life into a written medium. In addition, the combination of the visual and the verbal may also reflect the historical and significant culture of a particular time period or may be a modern callback to time of long ago.

Tim Burton’s film *Edward Scissorhands* was most definitely influenced by German Expressionism. The film tells the story of a young man named Edward whose creator died, and Edward must attempt to assimilate into a society where he does not fit in due to his technological deformity.

# **Sociology**

*Edward Scissorhands* examines the theme of identity and the human thirst for a sense of belonging. The protagonist’s spiritual desire for a place in this world in which he fails finds its roots in the Expressionist Movement of the 1920’s. Edward becomes overwhelmed by technology at first and then is able to succeed in an unfamiliar world with such tasks as cutting hair and barbequing. In the end, the world turns on him, and Edward must return to a world of obscurity, away from the society that originally embraced him but ultimately ostracized him. The film attempts to make the audience reassess how we treat outsiders and those just looking for a place to exist.

# **Aesthetics**

The film is aesthetically beautiful. The architecture of Edward’s castles echoes the German expressionist set angles of classic films: impossible angles, geometrically absurd sets, and hauntingly dark colors. Sticking in the vein of expressionism, the film presents an “unrealistic, dreamlike (almost nightmare-like) quality”. Of course, one can’t ignore the makeup, costuming, and movement of Johnny Depp; his characterization conjures up images of an *Edgar Allen Poe* short story come to life in a gorgeously grotesque way.

**Conclusion**

Tim Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands* is a modern classic that reflects the characteristics of

expressionism. A tortured soul seeks a meaningful existence against a backdrop of dark,

mysterious, and dreamlike sets, thus proving that cinematic trends of yesteryear are alive and

well today.

**GRADING RUBRIC**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| MLA FORMAT | 12 PT Times New Roman, Double Spaced, Correct Slug, indented paragraphs, sub-headings and title | 1-2 errors | 3-4 errors | More than 4 errors |
| GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION | Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, italics when neccessary | 1-2 errors | 3-4 errors | More than 4 errors |
| OPENING PARAGRAPH | Expertly describes movie and sets up essay; describes how expressionism influenced film  | Adequately describes movie and sets up essay; describes how expressionism influenced film  | Essay introduces movie but does not clearly connect to expressionism | Essay introduces movie but is confusing  |
| CRITERIA ONE | Essay expertly explains one of the five criteria from the handout and explains how the movie satisfies that requirement AND connects to characteristics of Expressionism | Essay adequately explains one of the five criteria from the handout and explains how the movie satisfies that requirement AND connects to characteristics of Expressionism | Essay explains one of the five criteria but does not clearly connect to expressionism  | Connection to expressionism is absent |
| CRITERIA TWO | Essay expertly explains one of the five criteria from the handout and explains how the movie satisfies that requirement AND connects to characteristics of Expressionism | Essay adequately explains one of the five criteria from the handout and explains how the movie satisfies that requirement AND connects to characteristics of Expressionism | Essay explains one of the five criteria but does not clearly connect to expressionism  | Connection to expressionism is absent |
| CONCLUSION | Essay expertly recaps the topic of the paper and connects back to cinema and expressionism | Essay adequately recaps the topic of the paper and connects back to cinema and expressionism | Essay recaps the topic of the paper but does not connect back to cinema and expressionism | Essay is confusing and doesn’t stay true to topic |

ESSAY IS WORTH 60 POINTS!